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EVALUATIONS (IV):

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

(Born 11th June, 1844).

THAT Hopkins has a permanent place among the English poets may now be taken as established beyond challenge: academic scholarship has canonized him, and the love of 'a continuous literary decorum' has forgotten the terms in which it was apt to express itself only a decade ago. It is now timely to ask just what that place is. Perhaps, indeed, formal evaluation may be judged a needless formality, the nature and significance of Hopkins's work, once it has been fairly looked at, not being very notably obscure. However, the centenary year of his birth seems a proper occasion for attempting a brief explicit summing-up.

A poet born in 1844 was a Victorian: if one finds oneself proffering this chronological truism to-day, when the current acceptance of Hopkins goes with a recognition that something has happened in English poetry since Bridges's taste was formed, it is less likely to be a note of irony, invoking a background contrast for Hopkins, than an insistence, or the preface to it, on the essential respects in which Hopkins was, even in his originality, *of* his time. His school poem, *A Vision of Mermaids*, shows him starting very happily in a Keatsian line, a normal young contemporary of Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Rossetti—in the association of which three names, it will perhaps be granted, the idea of 'Victorian poet' takes on sufficient force and definition to give that 'normal' its point. The element of Keats in Hopkins is radical and very striking:

> Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
> Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
> The can must be so sweet, the crust
> So fresh that come in fasts divine!
>
> Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
> Upon the stir and keep of pride,
> What relish shall the censers send
> Along the sanctuary side!
>
> O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
> That want the yield of plushy sward,
> But you shall walk the golden street
> And you unhouse and house the Lord.

These stanzas come from an 'Early Poem' printed by Bridges immediately before *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. A contemporary reader, if we can imagine it published at the time of writing, might very well have judged that this very decided young talent was to be distinguished from among his fellow Victorian poets by his

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unique possession, in an age pervaded by Keatsian aspirations and influences, of the essential Keatsian strength. Such a Victorian reader might very well have pronounced him, this strength clearly being native and inward, unmistakably a poet born—a poet incomparably more like Keats, the poet's poet (Keats was something like that for the Tennysonian age), than the derivatively Keatsian could make themselves. Actually, the body of the mature work—*The Wreck of the Deutschland* onwards—in which Hopkins's distinctive bent and his idiosyncrasy develop to the full doesn't prompt us with Keats's name so obviously. Yet the same strength, in its developed manifestations, is there.

It is a strength that gives Hopkins notable advantages over Tennyson and Matthew Arnold as a 'nature poet'. This description is Mr. Eliot's (see *After Strange Gods*, p. 48), and it is applicable enough for one to accept it as a way of bringing out how much Hopkins belongs to the Victorian tradition. Nature, beauty, transience—with these he is characteristically preoccupied:

> Margaret, are you grieving
> Over Goldengrove unleaving?
> Leaves, like the things of man, you
> With you fresh thoughts care for, can you?
> Ah! as the heart grows older
> It will come to such sights colder
> By and by, nor spare a sigh
> Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
> And yet you will weep and know why.
> Now no matter, child, the name:
> Sorrow's springs are the same.
> Nor mouth had, no, nor mind, expressed
> What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
> It is the blight man was born for,
> It is Margaret you mourn for.

Here the distinctiveness and the idiosyncrasy might seem hardly to qualify the Victorian normality of the whole (though Bridges couldn't permit the second couplet—see the improved poem that, modestly claiming no credit, he prints in *The Spirit of Man*). In

> What heart heard of, ghost guessed,

where the heart, wholly taken up in the hearing, becomes it, as the 'ghost' becomes the guessing, we have, of course, an example of a kind of poetic action or enactment that Hopkins developed into a staple habit of his art. As we have it, this use of assonantal progression, here, its relation to the sensibility and technique of

> Palate, the hutch of tasty lust

is plain. So too is the affinity between this last-quoted line and the 'bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees' in which the robust vitality of Keats's sensuousness shows itself in so un-Tennysonian,

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and so essentially poetic, a strength of expressive texture.

Hopkins was born—and died—in the age of Tennyson. This fact has an obvious bearing on the deliberateness with which Hopkins, starting with that peculiar genius, set himself to develop and exploit the modes and qualities of expression illustrated—the distinctive expressive resources of the English language ('English must be kept up'). The age in poetry *was* Tennyson's; and an age for which the ambition 'to bring English as near the Italian as possible' seems a natural and essentially poetic one, is an age in which the genius conscious enough to form a contrary ambition is likely to be very conscious and very contrary. That he was consciously bent on bringing back into poetry the life and strength of the living, the spoken, language is explicit—the confirmation was pleasant to have, though hardly necessary—in the *Letters* (to Bridges, LXII): 'it seems to me that the poetical language of the age shd. be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike it, but not (I mean normally: passing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one'. His praise of Dryden (CLV), held by Bridges to be no poet, is well-known: 'His style and rhythms lay the strongest stress of all our literature on the naked thew and sinew of the English language'. This preoccupation, pursued by a Victorian poet intensely given to technical experiment, would go far to explain the triumphs of invention, the extravagances and the oddities of Hopkins's verse.

But this is not the whole story. His bent for technical experiment can be seen to have been inseparable from a special kind of interest in pattern—his own term was 'inscape'. Here we have a head of consideration that calls for some inquiry, though it can be left for the moment with this parenthetic recognition, to be taken up again in due course.

Meanwhile, demanding immediate notice, there is a head the postponement of which till now may have surprised the reader. It is impossible to discuss for long the distinctive qualities of Hopkins's poetry without coming to his religion. In the matter of religion, of course, he differs notably from both Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, and the relevance of the differences to the business of the literary critic is best broached by noting that they lead up to the complete and staring antithesis confronting us when we place Hopkins by Rossetti. Here is Rossetti:

> Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
> Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
> Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
> I drew it in as simply as my breath.
> Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
> The sky and sea bend on thee—which can draw,
> By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
> The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.
>
> This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
> Thy voice and hand shake still—long known to thee

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By flying hair and fluttering hem—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

This very representative poem illustrates very obviously the immediate relevance for the literary critic of saying that religion in Hopkins's poetry is something completely other than the religion of Beauty. Rossetti's shamelessly cheap evocation of a romantic and bogus Platonism—an evocation in which 'significance' is vagueness, and profundity an uninhibited proffer of large drafts on a merely nominal account ('Life', 'love', 'death', 'terror', 'mystery', 'Beauty'—it is a bankrupt's lavishness)—exemplifies in a gross form the consequences of that separation of feeling ('soul'—the source of 'genuine poetry') from thinking which the Victorian tradition, in its 'poetical' use of language, carries with it. The attendant debility is apparent enough in Tennyson and Arnold, poets who often think they are thinking and who offer thought about life, religion and morals: of Arnold in particular the point can be made that what he offers poetically as thought is dismissed as negligible by the standards of his prose. When we come to the hierophant of Beauty, the dedicated poet of the cult, predecessor of the Pater who formulated the credo, we have something worse than debility. And there is not only a complete nullity in respect of thought—nullity made aggressively vulgar by a wordy pretentiousness (Rossetti is officially credited with 'fundamental brainwork'); the emotional and sensuous quality may be indicated by saying that in Rossetti's verse we find nothing more of the 'hard gem-like flame' than in Pater's prose.

Hopkins is the devotional poet of a dogmatic Christianity. For the literary critic there are consequent difficulties and delicacies. But there is something that can be seen, and said, at once: Hopkins's religious interests are bound up with the presence in his poetry of a vigour of mind that puts him in another poetic world from the other Victorians. It is a vitality of thought, a vigour of the thinking intelligence, that is at the same time a vitality of concreteness. The relation between this kind of poetic life and his religion manifests itself plainly in his addiction to Duns Scotus, whom, rather than St. Thomas, traditionally indicated for a Jesuit, he significantly embraced as his own philosopher. Of the philosophy of Duns Scotus it must suffice to say here[1] that it lays a peculiar stress on the particular and actual, in its full concreteness and individuality, as the focus of the real, and that its presence is felt whenever Hopkins uses the word 'self' (or some derivative verb) in his characteristic way. *Binsey Poplars* provides an instance where the significance for the literary critic is obvious. The poplars are

[1]An essay by Dom Sebastian Moore dealing with the relation of Hopkins to Duns Scotus will appear, I understand, in *The Downside Review* for next September.

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All felled, felled, are all felled,

and Hopkins's lament runs:

O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew—
Hack and rack the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being so slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselve
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

All the beauties Hopkins renders in his poetry are 'sweet especial scenes', 'selves' in the poignant significance their particularity has for him. Time 'unselves' them;

Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair,
Do what you may do, what, do what you may,
And wisdom is early to despair.

The Victorian-romantic addicts of beauty and transience cherish the pang as a kind of religiose-poetic sanction for defeatism in the face of an alien actual world—a defeatism offering itself as a spiritual superiority. Hopkins embraces transience as a necessary condition of any grasp of the real. The concern for such a grasp is there in the concrete qualities that give his poetry its vitality—which, we have seen, involves an energy of intelligence.

These qualities the literary critic notes and appraises, whether or not he knows any more about Duns Scotus than he can gather from the poetry. There is plainly a context of theological religion, and the devotional interest has plainly the kind of relation to the poetic qualities that has just been discussed. But the activities that go on within this context, even if they make Hopkins unlike Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, and Swinburne, don't do so by making him in any radical way like T. S. Eliot. It is a framework of the given, conditioning the system of tensions established within it, and these are those of a devotional poet. We can hardly imagine Hopkins entertaining, even in a remotely theoretical way, the kind of preoccupation conveyed by Eliot when he says: '. . . I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief, and to which I cannot see any reason for refusing the name of belief, unless we are to shuffle names altogether. It should hardly be needful to say that it will not in-

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evitably be orthodox Christian belief, although that possibly can be entertained, since Christianity will probably continue to modify itself, as in the past, into something that can be believed in (I do not mean *conscious* modifications like modernism etc., which always have the opposite effect). The majority of people live below the level of belief or doubt. It takes application and a kind of genius to believe anything, and to believe *anything* (I do *not* mean merely to believe in some "religion") will probably become more and more difficult as time goes on'. [*The Enemy*, January, 1927]. The stress of the 'terrible sonnets' hasn't this kind of context. And Hopkins's habit is utterly remote from Eliot's extreme discipline of continence in respect of affirmation—the discipline involving that constructive avoidance of the conceptual currency which has its exposition in *Burnt Norton*. For Hopkins the truths are *there*, simply and irresistibly demanding allegiance; though it is no simple matter to make his allegiance real and complete (this seems at any rate a fair way of suggesting the difference).

His preoccupation with this frame is of a kind that leaves him in a certain obvious sense simple-minded:

> Here he knelt then in regimental red.
> Forth Christ from cupboard fetched, how fain I of feet
> To his youngster take his treat!
> Low-latched in leaf-light housel his too huge godhead.

It is the simplicity of the single-minded and pure in heart. Its manifestations can be very disconcerting, and we are not surprised to learn that as a preacher he was apt, in his innocent unconsciousness, to put intolerable strains on the gravity of his congregation. It appears in the rime of the stanza immediately preceding that just quoted (it will be necessary, because of the run-over of the sense, to quote the two preceding):

> A bugler boy from barrack (it is over the hill
> There)—boy bugler, born, he tells me, of Irish
> Mother to an English sire (he
> Shares their best gifts surely, fall how things will),
>
> This very very day came down to us after a boon he on
> My late being there begged of me, overflowing
> Boon in my bestowing,
> Came, I say, this day to it—to a First Communion.

It takes a Bridges to find all, or most, of Hopkins's riming audacities unjustifiable; they are often triumphant successes in that, once the poem has been taken, they become inevitable, and, unlike Browning's ingenuities, cease to call attention to themselves (that in the first of these two stanzas is a passable ear-rime). Nevertheless there are a fair number of the order of *boon he on Communion*, and it has to be conceded more generally that the naïvety illustrated has some part in the elaborations of his technique.

To say this, of course, is not to endorse Lord David Cecil's

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view that Hopkins is difficult because of his difficult way of saying simple things. It is relevant, but hardly necessary, to remark that for Hopkins his use of words is not a matter of *saying* things with them; he is preoccupied with what seems to him the poetic use of them, and that is a matter of making them do and be. Even a poet describable as 'simple-minded' may justify some complexities of 'doing' and 'being'. And if we predicate simplicity of Hopkins, it must be with the recognition that he has at the same time a very subtle mind.

The subtlety is apparent in the tropes, conceits and metaphorical symbolism that give his poetry qualities suggesting the seventeenth century rather than the nineteenth. He can be metaphysical in the full sense; as, for instance, he is, triumphantly, in the first part of *The Wreck of the Deutschland,* notably in stanzas 4 to 8. The radically metaphorical habit of mind and sensibility that, along with concrete strength from which it is inseparable, makes his 'nature poetry' so different from Tennyson's and Matthew Arnold's, relates him to Herbert rather than to Eliot—it goes with the 'frame' spoken of above. It is a habit of seeing things as charged with significance; 'significance' here being, not a romantic vagueness, but a matter of explicit and ordered conceptions regarding the relations between God, man and nature. It is an inveterate habit of his mind and being, finding its intellectual formulation in Duns Scotus.

Of course, to be seventeenth-century in the time of Tennyson is a different matter from being it in the time of Herbert, Hopkins's unlikeness to whom involves a great deal more than the obvious difference of temperament. He is still more unlike Crashaw: his 'metaphysical' audacity is the expression of a refined and disciplined spirit, and there is no temperamental reason why it shouldn't have been accompanied by something corresponding to Herbert's fine and poised *social* bearing. But behind Hopkins there is no Ben Jonson, and he has for contemporaries no constellation of courtly poets uniting the 'metaphysical' with the urbane. His distinctiveness develops itself even in his prose, which has a dignified oddity such as one might have taken for affectation if it hadn't been so obviously innocent and unconscious.

Of the development of 'distinctiveness' in verse he himself says, in a passage that gives us the word:

> 'But as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern, or what I am in the habit of calling *inscape* is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive, and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer. This vice I cannot have escaped'. (see *Poems,* 2nd Edition, p. 96).

Isolation, he might have added, would favour the vice. But the peculiar development of the interest in pattern or 'inscape' has, it may be suggested, a significance not yet touched on. We can't help relating it to a certain restriction in the nourishing interests

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behind Hopkins's poetry. It is as if his intensity, for lack of adequately answering substance, expressed itself in a kind of hypertrophy of technique, and in an excessive imputation of significance to formal pattern.

It may be replied that his concern for pattern in verse is paralleled by a concern for pattern (or 'inscape' we had better say, since the word associates the idea of 'pattern' with Hopkins's distinctive stress on the individuality or 'self' of the object contemplated) in the sights—a tree, a waterfall, a disposition of clouds—that he renders from nature; renders in drawings as well as in verse and prose. But his interest in nature—to call attention to that is to make the same point again. In assenting, half-protestingly, to Mr. Eliot's description of him as a 'nature poet' one is virtually recognizing that a significant limitation reveals itself when a poet of so remarkable a spiritual intensity, so intense a preoccupation with essential human problems, gives 'nature'—the 'nature' of the 'nature poets'—so large a place in his poetry. What is revealed as limited, it will be said, is Hopkins's power to transcend the poetic climate of his age: in spite of the force of his originality he is a Victorian poet. This seems an unanswerable point. But even here, in respect of his limitation, his distinctiveness comes out: the limitation goes with the peculiar limitation of experience attendant upon his early world-renouncing self-dedication:

> Elected Silence, sing to me
> And beat upon my whorlèd ear,
> Pipe me to pastures still and be
> The music that I care to hear.
>
> Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
> It is the shut, the curfew sent
> From there where all surrenders come
> Which only makes you eloquent.
>
> Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark
> And find the uncreated light:
> This ruck and reel which you remark
> Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.
>
> * * * *
>
> And, Poverty, be thou the bride
> And now the marriage feast begun,
> And lily-coloured clothes provide
> Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

(This is the remainder of the 'Early Poem', *The Habit of Perfection*, from which, in the opening of this essay, stanzas were quoted in illustration of Keatsian qualities).

The force of this last point is manifest in the ardent naïvety with which he idealizes his buglers, sailors, schoolboys and his England:

> England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
> To my creating thought . . .

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Meeting him in 1882, his old schoolmaster, Dixon, says: 'In so far as I can remember you are very like the boy of Highgate'. But this unworldliness is of a different order from the normal other-worldliness of Victorian poetry. Addressing Hopkins, Matthew Arnold might, without the radical confusion symbolized in his Scholar Gypsy, have said:

> For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
> Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
> Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
> Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt . . .

The 'firmness to the mark' is really there in Hopkins's poetry; the 'mark' is not a mere postulated something that confers (we are to grant) a spiritual superiority upon the eternal week-ender who, 'fluctuating idly without term or scope' among the attractions of the countryside, parallels in his indolent poetical way the strenuous aimlessness of the world where things are done. To Hopkins it might have been said with some point:

> Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire.

Yet this unworldliness, different though it is from Victorian poetical other-worldliness, does unmistakably carry with it the limitation of experience. And in his bent for 'nature' there is after all in Hopkins something of the poetical Victorian. It is a bent away from urban civilization, in the midst of which he spends his life, and which, very naturally, he regards with repulsion:

> Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
> And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
> And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
> And for all this, nature is never spent;
> There lives the dearest freshness deep down things; . . .

And in *The Sea and the Skylark* he says:

> How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
> How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
> Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,
> Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
> Our make and making break, are breaking, down
> To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

Towards these aspects of human life his attitude—he is very much preoccupied with them—is plain. But they have little more actual presence in his poetry than 'this strange disease of modern life' has in Arnold's.

To come back now to his isolation—we have not yet taken full account of it. It is not merely a matter of his having had no support or countenance in accepted tradition, contemporary practice, and the climate of taste and ideas: he was isolated in a way

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peculiarly calculated to promote starvation of impulse, the over-developed and ingrown idiosyncrasy, and the sterile deadlock, lapsing into stagnation. As a convert he had with him a tide of the élite (he could feel); as a Catholic and a Jesuit he had his communities, the immediate and the wider. But from this all-important religious context he got no social endorsement as a poet: the episode of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*—'they dared not print it'—is all there is to tell, and it says everything; it came at the beginning and it was final. Robert Bridges, his life-long friend and correspondent, confidently and consistently discouraged him with 'water of the lower Isis': 'your criticism is . . . only a protest memorializing me against my whole policy and proceedings' (xxxvii). As against this we can point, for the last seven years of Hopkins's life, to the enthusiasm of Canon Dixon, a good and generous man, but hardly transmutable by Hopkins's kind of need (or Hopkins's kind of humility) into an impressive critical endorsement or an adequate substitute for a non-existent public.

To these conditions the reaction of so tense and disciplined an ascetic is the reverse of Blake's: he doesn't become careless, but—'Then again I have of myself made verse so laborious' (LIII, to Bridges). (And here the following—from CLXVI—has an obvious relevance: 'To return to composition for a moment: what I want there, to be more intelligible, smoother, and less singular, is an audience'.) With the laboriousness goes the anguish of sterility registered in this sonnet—one of his finest poems:

> Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
> With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
> Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
> Disappointment all I endeavour end?
> Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
> How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
> Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
> Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
> Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes
> Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
> With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
> Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,
> Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
> Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

That there is a relation between this state of mind and his isolation, the absence of response, he himself knows: 'There is a point with me in matters of any size', he writes (CXXIX, to Bridges) 'when I must absolutely have encouragement as much as crops rain; afterwards I am independent'. The recurrence of the metaphor is significant, and the passage is clearly to be related to this other passage, itself so clearly related to the sonnet: 'if I could but get on, if I could but produce work, I should not mind its being buried, silenced, and going no farther; but it kills me to be time's eunuch and

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never to beget' (CXXX). And again, he writes (CLVII): 'All impulse fails me: I can give myself no reason for not going on. Nothing comes: I am a eunuch—but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake'. About the failure of impulse we are certainly in a position to say something.

It seems reasonable to suppose that if he had had the encouragement he lacked he would have devoted to poetry a good deal of the energy that (for the last years of his life a painfully conscientious Professor of Greek) he distributed, in a strenuous dissipation that undoubtedly had something to do with his sense of being time's eunuch and never producing, between the study of music, musical composition, drawing, and such task-work as writing a 'popular account of Light and Ether'[2] For he was certainly a born writer. This is apparent in the Letters in ways we could hardly have divined from the poetry. Consider, for instance, the distinguished naturalness, the sensitive vivacity, the flexibility, and the easy sureness of touch of such representative passages as the following:

> 'Tomorrow morning I shall have been three years in Ireland, three hard wearying wasted years. (I met the blooming Miss Tynan again this afternoon. She told me that when she first saw me she took me for 20 and some friends of hers for 15; but it won't do: they should see my heart and vitals, all shaggy with the whitest hair). In those I have done God's will (in the main) and many examination papers'.

> 'There was a lovely and passionate scene (for about the space of the last trump) between me and a tallish gentleman (I daresay he was a cardsharper) in your carriage who was by way of being you; I smiled, I murmured with my lips at him, I waved farewells, but he would not give in, till with burning shame (though the whole thing was, as I say, like the duels of archangels) I saw suddenly what I was doing'.

Actually, of course, Hopkins did 'produce': there is a substantial body of verse, a surprising preponderance of which—surprising, when we consider his situation and the difficulties in the way of success—deserves currency among the classics of the language. His supreme triumphs, unquestionably classical achievements, are the last sonnets—the 'terrible sonnets' together with *Justus es,* the one just quoted, and that inscribed *To R. B.* (who prints it with the unsanctioned and deplorable substitution of 'moulds' for 'combs' in the sixth line). These, in their achieved 'smoother style', triumphantly justify the oddest extragavances of his experimenting. Technique here is the completely unobtrusive and marvellously economical and efficient servant of the inner need, the pressure to be defined and conveyed. At the other extreme are such things as *Tom's Garland* and *Harry Ploughman,* where, in the absence of

[2]'Popular is not quite the word: it is not meant to be easy reading' (XXXV, to Dixon).

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controlling pressure from within, the elaborations and ingenuities of 'inscape' and of expressive license result in tangles of knots and strains that no amount of reading can reduce to satisfactory rhythm or justifiable complexity. In between come the indubitable successes of developed 'inscape': *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (which seems to me a great poem—at least for the first two-thirds of it), *The Windhover, Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,* and, at a lower level, *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo. Henry Purcell* calls for mention as a curious special case. There can be few readers who have not found it strangely impressive, and few who could have elucidated it without extraneous help. It is not independent of the explanatory note by Hopkins that Bridges prints; yet when one approaches it with the note fresh in mind the intended meaning seems to be sufficiently *in* the poem to allay, at any rate, the dissatisfaction caused by baffled understanding.

About Hopkins as a direct influence there seems little to say. The use of him by Left poets in the 'thirties was not of a kind to demand serious critical attention. Where he is, beyond question, to be felt is in the heightened sense, characterizing taste and criticism in our time, for what may be called the Shakespearian (as opposed to the Miltonic) potentialities of English.

F. R. LEAVIS.

RILKE AND HŒLDERLIN IN TRANSLATION[1]

I.

J. B. Leishman's sustained translation of Rilke's poetry is, of course, the predominant one, and in its way probably insurpassable. His work on this great German poet in the way of translations, introductions and commentaries comprises, I think, one of the major achievements of contemporary literature, creative or critical. But there is room for the versions of other translators and particularly for one so honest and unpretentious as Mrs. Speirs'. Leishman's translations are, in general, better poetry, they are suave and possess that fluency with which Rilke customarily presents his astounding visions. They give slight hint of their being translations, and are perhaps even a little slick, sometimes faintly reminiscent of the manner of our Younger Poets. Notwithstanding, in his rendering of the lovely early poem, *Verkündigung* ('Annunciation'),

[1] *Rainer Maria Rilke: Selected Poems,* translated by Ruth Speirs (The Anglo Egyptian Bookshop).
Poems of Hœlderlin, translated with an introduction by Michael Hamburger (Nicholson and Watson, 6/-).

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or the 17th *Sonnet to Orpheus* (Part Two)—two especially striking instances—he has carried over the original rhythms into English with a delicate accuracy which is quite unimpeachable.

A comparison of his version of this sonnet with Mrs. Speirs' brings out their difference as translators:

> Where, in what ever-blissfully watered gardens, upon what trees,
> out of, oh, what gently-dispetalled flower-cups do these
> so strangely appearing fruits of consolation mature?
> Delicious, when, now and then, you pick one up in the poor
>
> trampled field of your poverty . . .
> Have we, then, never been able, we shadows and shades,
> with our doing that ripens too early and then as suddenly fades,
> to disturb that even-tempered summer's repose?
> (Leishman).
>
> Where, in which forever-blissfully watered gardens, on which
> trees, out of which tenderly un-petalled flowercups
> ripen the strange fruits of consolation? Those, delicious,
> one of which you may find in the trodden meadow
>
> Of your poverty . . .
> Have we never been able, we phantoms and shadows,
> by our conduct—hastily ripened and withered again—
> to disturb those tranquil summers' equanimity?
> (Speirs).

Mrs. Speirs' interpretations are less skilled as poetry; they bear the usual marks of a translation—a certain stiffness and just a trace of hesitancy which does not occur in the original, least of all in Rilke whose *Taktwechsel* (or sudden changes of metre) appear within a greater smoothness which confutes those who traffic in the 'profundity' of rugged rhythms. But Mrs. Speirs is, first of all, a faithful translator. Whereas Mr. Leishman is more interested in reproducing or approximating to rhythms, she has set out to reproduce words, metaphors and similes. This sometimes gives her the advantage over Mr. Leishman, whose creative tendencies are obviously a temptation, as in the 2nd *Sonnet to Orpheus* (Part One):

> Die Bäume, die ich je bewundert, diese
> fühlbare Ferne, die gefühlte Wiese
> und jedes Staunen, das mich selbst betraf.

For this, Mrs. Speirs has

> the trees I ever marvelled at, this distance
> that can be felt, the meadow grasped in feeling,
> and every wondering about myself

which is word perfect. Leishman, however, lashes out with

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trees I had marvelled at, leaved and unleaved,
perceptible distances, meadows perceived,
and the heart-harvests only I could reap

which is quite effective verse but at some remove from Rilke.

To balance this, I think Mrs. Speirs makes a slight error, a misunderstanding rather than a mistranslation, in her version of *Der Tod der Geliebten* (from the *Neue Gedichte*)—'The Death of the Beloved':

He knew of death no more than what all know:
it takes and thrusts us into what is mute.
But when, not torn away from him,
no, gently loosened from his eyes,

she glided past to unknown shadows,
and when he felt they had their maiden smile
now yonder like a moon
and their own way of doing good:

the dead grew as well known to him
as if through her he were quite closely
related to each one of them; he let the others speak,

did not believe, and called that land
the ever-sweet and the well-situated—.
And with his touch prepared it for her feet.

The original of the second stanza is:

und als er fühlte, dass sie drüben nun
wie einen Mond ihr Mädchenlächeln hatten
und ihre Weise wohlzutun

and I think this is more aptly translated as

and when he felt they had *her* maiden smile
now yonder like a moon
and *her* own way of doing good . . .

And I think that perhaps the last line in the poem (which, incidentally, is a characteristically Rilkean minor poem)—'Und tastete es ab für ihre Füsse'—is likelier translated as 'And groped about it for her feet', since presumably the Beloved is already there.

But these are small points, and if we turn to the difficult *Third Duino Elegy* we find Mrs. Speirs beating Leishman at his own speciality of turning German poetry into English verse. How superior is her rendering of the lovely passage beginning 'O des Blutes Neptun':

O the blood's Neptune, O his terrible trident.
O, out of a wound shell, the dark wind of his chest.
Hear how the night moulds and hollows itself.

(Speirs).

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> Oh, the Neptune within our blood, oh, his terrible trident!
> Oh, the gloomy blast of his breast from the twisted shell!
> Hark, how the night grows fluted and hollowed.
> (Leishman).

Leishman is at his best when dealing with the more compact poems, the sonnets for instance, and his translations of the *Duino Elegies* (in collaboration with Spender) show signs of clumsiness and undue contortion. His version of this 3rd *Elegy* grates twice on the ear—with 'his restless future, that easily got out of place' when Mrs. Speirs has 'easily shifting, his restless future', and '*this* got the start of you, maid' for Mrs. Speirs' '*this*, maiden, was there before you'. The original of the last phrase is '*dies* kam dir, Mädchen, zuvor', so simple and smooth that Leishman's harsh wording is difficult to understand.

By and large I should recommend Leishman's Rilke to those who read no German and desire something reasonably similar in effect to the original, and Mrs. Speirs' Rilke to those who know something of the language and need help in elucidating this poetry which can so easily be misunderstood.

II.

The thought behind Rilke's poetry is, really, the very opposite of esoteric. And it is, I think, by no means to be justly termed a 'philosophy', but at the most merely the raw materials out of which most recognized philosophies worthy of the name have been built. Rilke's fundamental doctrine is that the life of a race is continuous, that the life of an individual person is similarly continuous, and that each of these facts depends upon the other:

> Siehe, wir lieben nicht, wie die Blumen, aus einem
> einzigen Jahr; uns steigt, wo wir lieben,
> unvordenklicher Saft in die Arme. O Mädchen,
> dies: dass wir liebten *in* uns, nicht Eines, ein Künftiges, sondern
> das zahllos Brauende; nicht ein einzelnes Kind,
> sondern die Väter, die wie Trümmer Gebirgs
> uns im Grunde beruhn; sondern das trockene Flussbett
> einstiger Mütter—; sondern die ganze
> lautlose Landschaft unter dem wolkigen oder
> reinen Verhängnis—: *dies* kam dir, Mädchen, zuvor.[2]

This is hardly extravagant. The next step in Rilke's argument is more interesting; he says, in effect: every one of us has a duty to the World ('das Aussen') as we receive it from our predecessors. We must 'realize the world anew', we must so take to our hearts all the natural landscape, the art and the craft of living as our forefathers knew them and their customs and beliefs, that these are kept alive, active and powerful. By ceasing to live in ancestral homes and migrating instead to upstart bungalows and cold colour-

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less flats, we have allowed part of our heritage (and our responsibility) to perish; and in so doing, we have inflicted on ourselves a serious wound. Should we ever come to ignore consistently the passage of the sun and never give the trees an atom of thought, then gradually the sun would disappear and the trees wither, and for us the end would be a universal and unmitigated starvation of the spirit which no amount of noise and bustle could disguise. The Individual and the World, the Inner and the Outer, are, Rilke emphasizes, inextricably interdependent, in an almost inconceivable tradition of interdependence. In the ignorance of conceit we would seem to be breaking up this time-honoured mutual alliance. There is a passage in that remarkable letter to his Polish translator, von Hulewicz—a document at once so illuminating and yet specious—which indicates sufficiently his opinion of a world where the tools of living come from Woolworth's and hardly last long enough to acquire the aura of tradition:

> Now there come crowding over from America empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things, dummy-life . . . A house, in the American understanding, an American apple or vine, has nothing in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and meditation of our forefathers had entered . . . . The animated, experienced things that share our lives are coming to an end and cannot be replaced. We are perhaps the last to have still known such things.

I doubt whether any intelligent person, knowing that language is at the best symbolic, will deny that this is a quite reasonable line of thought, or that Rilke's fears were very relevant. But what I wish to suggest is that this idea of the intimate interdependence of the human and the non-human world is, though rarely obtrusive, the essential one, to be kept constantly in mind when reading Rilke's work. Yet this wider, 'social' aspect has largely been neglected or, at the most, received only a casual consideration, while excessive attention has been focussed on the 'subjective' counterpart—the

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[2]See, we do not love like the flowers,
out of one single year; immemorial sap
rises into our arms when we love. O maiden,
this: that we loved *within* us, not one, one to come,
but numberless brewing; not one single child,
but the fathers who rest like fragments of mountains
within our depth; but the dry river-bed
of former mothers—; but the entire
soundless landscape under a cloudy or pure
ill-fate—: *this*, maiden, was there before you.
(*Third Duino Elegy*).

This, Mrs. Speirs' translation, is excellent but for one point: I don't see that 'Verhängnis' necessarily means *ill*-fate. Leishman uses the word 'destiny' which is much more apposite.

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tradition of life in the *individual*—for Rilke's urgent assertion that Death is not a sudden and catastrophic destruction of life but simply a natural transition within a larger Life, has attracted the jaded commentator by its greater luridness. Death, and Love too, certainly figure prominently in his poetry, but after all, besides being the two most common poetic subjects, they are the touchstones on which a philosophy is usually tested.

By this appreciative attitude to death, Rilke has provoked a good deal of talk about his 'death-tendencies' which is all so much nonsense unless the word 'death' is used with the exact meaning he gave it. But to critics who have brought against him this charge of inability to stomach life with all its crudities and inconsiderateness, 'death' just means 'the end', and Rilke had not the slightest tendency towards ending.

Moreover he was preoccupied with the past only in as far that the more past there was behind any given present, the richer that present would be—or could be. For the past can only be tapped if we are living in close intimacy with every aspect of the present, and that intimacy should imply more than an acquaintance with the labels that other people have hung about the world: it must be a sustained personal quest for the essential character of all available objects and conceptions. And the great evil is that we are losing our capacity for that kind of intimacy. We are wasting our great inheritance and we shall have little to bequeath to our heirs.

In summing up, one could say that Rilke's zeal was for a certain conception of civilization. This was not a civilization based on Progress in the lower sense of that word, perhaps it would be truer to say that it was based on Preservation—but preservation by use, for by no means was it a static civilization. Rilke used the metaphor of *metamorphosis of the visible into the Invisible* for that process whereby we, in our lives, could transform mundane realities into intangible powers and influences for which no better collective name can be found than *Tradition*. Thus a civilization of this kind, continually both living on and building up a tradition, would also be continually evolving. The more understanding we give to our houses, our mountains, the wind, the flowers, the more acute their significance will become—a significance which will operate to our good. Every generation could, potentially, enjoy an increase of vitality, beauty, subtlety of experience and meaningfulness over the last: it could be just a little nearer to that poignantly symbolic figure, the 'Angel' of the *Duino Elegies,* who

> is the creature in whom that transformation of the visible into the invisible we are performing already appears complete . . . the Angel of the Elegies is the being who vouches for the recognition of a higher degree of reality in the invisible—therefore 'terrible' to us, because we, its lovers and transformers, still depend on the visible.[3]

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[3]*Letter to von Hulewicz.*

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Since, if I may reiterate, there is no particular obscurity about Rilke's thought, and his ideal of civilization and intense appreciation of what life is, let alone what it might be, are in the best sense conventional, then why (one may well ask) all these agonized exegetics, all these interpretative monographs, so close-reasoned and yet so diverse?

I think there are two reasons. The first I touched on previously in describing the thought-structure of Rilke's poetry as not so much a philosophy proper as the raw materials of any number of systems. If the commentator develops Rilke's one or two main ideas one way, Rilke can be proved a Catholic, if another way, then he can be shown to have theosophical tendencies, and if the commentator chooses to shoot off Rilke's circle of existence at some or other tangent, he can be made to conform to almost any modern unorthodoxy. Rilke's poetry is so sharp, so solid, so hard with the purely poetic power of imagination that practically any axe can be ground on it.

What further obscures the issue is the fact that these interpreters and axe-grinders can sometimes produce Rilke's own prose 'explanations' and philosophizing to support their contentions. Their mistake is to assume a dividing-line between his poetry and his prose: there is no valid distinction. When Rilke was writing about or lecturing on his 'system of thought' (for he claimed such) he was in reality still composing poetry. His interpretations are simply more poems, poems in prose, poems in letters, and while they are indeed an aid to the understanding of his poetry, they cannot be said to elucidate his philosophy. Rilke, when he wrote that 'Elegien und Sonette unterstützen sich Beständig, (*i.e.* the Elegies and the Sonnets are in constant mutual support), was claiming that the two works, thus poised, manifest a metaphysical harmony; but actually the result is a harmony of emotions or, at the very most, a harmony of *attitudes*—if one means by that phrase an equilibrium of thought and feeling which is only for that moment, and in that place, true.

The first thing anyone wishing to enjoy Rilke must do is to thrust out of his mind the many tangents along which Rilke's tenets have been more or less forcibly stretched and settle down to consider which way Rilke *himself* developed his ideas. I think the solution to this, the crux of the matter, is that Rilke did not develop those ideas in any direction—in a *philosophical* manner. He did develop them in a *poetic* manner, and so far and in so many directions—with a radial movement away from his central beliefs, which are sometimes almost forgotten—that the result is poetry of the very first order. But it is not philosophy of any order. There is a less ambitious remark of Rilke's, about the *Sonnets to Orpheus* but valid in general of his work, which all critics should ponder before they lose themselves in the mazes of the expository *Letter to von Hulewicz*:

> there is something in the very nature of these poems, in their condensation and abbreviation (frequently stating lyrical totals,

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instead of setting out the stages necessary to the result), that makes them more likely to be grasped by the inspiration of one similarly focussed than generally 'understood'.

(*Briefe aus Muzot*).

On first reading Rilke I inclined to think that, while his poetry was based on ideas sufficiently clear-cut and reasonable, he tended to 'fill in' with minor ideas, or notions, which were less unimpeccable. These pseudo-philosophical frills seemed to me to obscure and even distort the fundamental argument. There may be some truth in this, but the more I read of his poetry the more acutely aware I become of the necessity to distinguish between intellectual stuffing or metaphysical embroidery and the actual process of *poetically experiencing* ideas. When the reader derives a rather bizarre experience from one of Rilke's poems, he may suspect a temporary intellectual perversity or extravagance latent in that poem. But examination will likely prove that the intellectual element is sound enough and that this impression of bizarrerie is due to the fact that the idea is functioning in a situation where one would hardly expect it. The 15th *Sonnet to Orpheus* (Part I)—'Tanzt die Orange'—is a simple example of the case in hand:

> Dance the orange. Who can forget it—
> The way it would drown in itself, and fight
> Against its excessive sweetness?

The casual reader may say 'Oh, surrealism', and leave it at that, while the interpreter will be only too ready to seize on the idea of 'The Orange as Dance' and attribute to Rilke some theory or other about Matter and Flux which was never for one moment in his head. 'Dance the orange' is simply Rilke's repeated injunction, this time in an unusual but effective connection, to identify oneself with the vivid life of a so-called inanimate natural object. Rilke's commentators have been too clever by half: they should bear in mind what Arnold said about Wordsworth's philosophy being an 'illusion'.

Though no determinable philosopher, then, Rilke was one of the most thorough-going poets we have in any language. Accompanied by what I hope it does not sound derogatory to call a few general ideas, he penetrated into innumerable holes and crannies of the human and natural situation. Landscapes, buildings, human psychology, oranges, antiquity, acrobats, the Bible story, childhood, day and night, animal life, and above all the two great phenomena of love and death—he seized all into his magnificent imagination.

He does not bring forward a theory of life and then support it with evidence: he links an embryonic theory with his specifically poetic abilities and, as it were, lets them loose in life itself, to find their own evidence and present it in the form of poetry. And there is nothing of dogmatism in the part his theory plays in this alliance: the poet is not so much living by ideas as living with them. That

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is what his work, basically, is: an exciting and exhaustive account of 'life with ideas'. And if, after all, there are not so many ideas in that poetry, we must remember that there is an abundance of life, and that is the important thing.

III.

Mr. Hamburger ask that his translations of Hölderlin, printed opposite the German, should be read as 'an introduction to Hölderlin's work, or as an aid for those who cannot read the original with ease, rather than as a personal rendering or imitation', and as such they are very successful, both sound and readable. His book, with its long introduction, is a useful complement to A. Closs's *Hölderlin: Gedichte,* published last year.

There has not been the same fuss over Hölderlin's philosophy as over Rilke's, simply because Hölderlin is more obviously, and more conventionally, a thinker. He cannot be said to have formulated a system to which one can refer all questions of faith or conduct, but his intellectual qualities are far higher than would be implied by the term *Griechenschwärmerei* or even the less derogatory 'Hellenic'. Mr. Hamburger says that Rilke praised Hölderlin 'for revealing the divine on earth, and asked how we could still 'mistrust the earthly' after the appearance of this poet'. Certainly they were both fiercely opposed to any form of transcendentalism, both concerned with an ideal of civilization very much down to earth, a 'Humanität'. Hölderlin found his ideal incarnate in ancient Greece, 'Seeliges Griechenland! du Haus der Himmlischen alle', a Greece that is not in the least 'antique'; Rilke, however, found it wherever he could, often in unlikely places, and so desiderates that ideal with a far wider sweep.

Both poets protest against the spiritual conceit which marks those kinds of philosophical idealism to which they have sometimes been attributed, and both of them urge the wholly opposed virtue of piety. Hölderlin exhorts the 'Young Poets' to 'simply be pious, like the Greek was', for men serve gods willy nilly and should not presumptuously steel themselves against their natural mould. And Rilke, too, steers a subtle course between mysticism and materialism; in the letter to his Polish translator he gives a striking image of man's cosmological position: *we are the bees of the Invisible*—we are unceasingly collecting and hoarding up a Future, and in so doing we resemble bees in both leading a naturally-ordained life and simultaneously rendering benefits to others we can hardly conceive of. The one feeling both are left with after they have considered man's relation to the cosmos is that of piety, that attitude which strikes the mean between servility to terrible gods and the *hubris* of the 'free individual', a compound of gratitude, social loyalty, pride in the achievement and modesty as to the means.

Consequently both of them are prepared for sorrow and evil times and regard them as merely the reverse side of a precious medal. The faculty of suffering is, after all, as natural as that of joy: it is,

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like the Night, 'original'. There is a fine passage in the magnificent late ode, *Patmos,* which expresses very movingly Hölderin's stoicism:

> . . . . when the demi-god's honour
> And that of his followers
> Vanishes, and, thereupon,
> Even the Highest averts
> His face, so that nowhere again
> An immortal is to be seen in the skies or
> On the green earth, what is this?
>
> It is the sower's throw, when he holds
> The wheat in his shovel,
> And throws, towards the clear, swinging it over
> The thrashing-floor. The husks fall at his feet, but
> The corn reaches its end.
> It is not evil if some
> Is lost and the living sound
> Of speech dies away:
> *For divine work also resembles ours.*
> *Not all things at once does the Highest want.*[4]

Similarly, there is plenty of evidence in letters and in the poetry that Rilke wished his 'lamentations' to be taken always in conjunction with his 'jubilations', and to assume no greater importance than as the slow movement in the poised symphony of life:

> As my creative powers derive in the last resort from the most direct admiration of life, from the daily inexhaustible wonder at it (how else could I have come to my art?), I could not but consider it a lie against life if I ever arrested its flow towards me. Any such denial would revenge itself by appearing as hardness in my art, however much the latter might gain potentially by such a denial. For who could be quite open and receptive on such a sensitive plane, if he had a mistrustful, restrictive or timid attitude towards life?
>
> (from a letter, 1921).

This 'long view' of history saved both poets, believing as they did that they were living in the era of Night, the ages of collapse and catastrophe, from the bitterness that might otherwise have strangled them.

Sharing common attitudes of mind, yet the two poets have produced utterly dissimilar verse. One difference lies in the range of their work: Rilke's imagination illuminates so much of the human landscape, like the revolving beam from a lighthouse, whereas Hölderlin's is better likened to the intense frozen beam of a searchlight. Hölderlin fashions his fable from Nature, the most intimate and obvious guise of the gods, and from Greece, the house of the gods, but Rilke finds his most delicate of sermons everywhere.

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[4]Hamburger's translation; my italics.

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A subsidiary difference is that Hölderlin is more truly a philosopher, since the comparative narrowness of his imagination lends his thought an intensity that Rilke's lacks. Their attitudes to Christ and Christianity are symptomatic: Rilke seems just a little uncomfortable on this point and is reported to have told someone that 'Christ was in his way' ('Christus sei ihm in Weg'), which would indicate that Christianity is neither excluded from nor satisfactorily included in his thought. Hölderlin's attitude, on the other hand, is logical, and shows a logical development: at first, Christ is the last of the demi-gods and a solitary symbol of hope, but Hölderlin's enthusiasm for the figure of Christ increases till he writes in *Der Einzige*:

> I have seen much
> That is beautiful, and
> I have hymned the image
> Of God that lives
> Among men. And yet,
> O ancient gods and all
> You brave sons of the gods,
> I seek yet another, whom
> I love, among you,
> Where you conceal to me,
> To the foreign guest, the last
> Of your race, the jewel of the house.

And, at the peak of his achievement, in *Patmos,* while still holding to his original and individual form of pantheism, Hölderlin is very near to a fine orthodox Christianity:

> And if the heavenly now
> Love me as I believe,
> How much more you,
> For one thing I know,
> Namely that the eternal
> Father's will counts
> Much with you. Silent is his sign
> On thundering heaven. And there is one who stands beneath
> His whole life long. For Christ yet lives.

Rilke's work exhibits a development in poetic qualities, but there is manifest in Hölderlin, until his mind collapsed, a development both in poetry and in belief.

IV.

It would be a little portentous to deduce hope for future international amity from the excellent work of such as Mrs. Speirs and Messrs. Leishman and Hamburger, but it is a fine thing to see their books published at a time when, among the circles of the learned, a kind of Vansittartism is beginning to pervade the sphere of culture. Recently I read a book which set out to prove that German artists were always either bad (sentimental searchers for the Blue Flower

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of Romanticism or Nietzschean bogymen) or else not German. Those few who were undoubtedly German and indubitably good, had never been taken, it was shown, to the hearts of their countrymen. (But of how many good English writers and musicians could one not say the same?). The remarkable musical record of this nation was then dismissed on the grounds that music is amoral, or 'pure', and hence the favourite medium for so immoral and metaphysically impure a race. But this zealous iconoclast rather overdid it when he pointed out how a certain important German novelist was, firstly, afflicted with the typical Teutonic vices, and, secondly, largely neglected by the German public. This kind of propaganda is a particularly revolting *trahison des clerc*: if our intellectuals intend to fight this war then let them get on with it, and not behave like small-town bank-clerks intriguing to get their colleagues the sack.

It takes a good, fat, and inexpensive book like Mr. Hamburger's translations of Hölderlin to compensate for the wastage of paper on wranglings which are at the same time both petty and specious, and double-edged.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

A CRITICAL THEORY OF JANE AUSTEN'S WRITINGS

III. THE LETTERS

THE first thing to be said about Jane Austen's letters is that we have comparatively few of them and those certainly not the more personal ones. Cassandra her sister, to whom the bulk of the novelist's correspondence seems to have been addressed, destroyed all except those which seemed to her trivial,[1] distributing among the family as mementoes what she did not burn. Some of a more intimate kind which were written to the sailor brothers and the favourite nieces and nephews, and to one or two close friends, survived independently. None of those has been found which were written to the peculiarly congenial brother, Henry, who managed her literary business, though this series of letters might well have been the most interesting of all to us. We have no letters before

[1]Their nephew complained: 'Her nearest relatives, far from making provision for such a purpose (a biography), had actually destroyed many of the letters and papers by which it might have been facilitated. They were influenced, I believe, partly by an extreme distaste to publishing any private details.' *A Memoir of Jane Austen* by J. E. Austen-Leigh.

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1796, when she became twenty-one, none for 1797, when Cassandra's fiancé died, nor any between 1801 and 1804, the period when a number of important events occurred in Jane's emotional history. It is not surprising therefore that they have generally been described as disappointing. Bradley alone praises them, declaring 'I do not find the letters disappointing', because 'The Jane Austen who wrote the novels is in them . . . And the attitude of the letter-writer towards the world she lives in is the attitude of the novel-writer towards the world she creates'. This is very just but he does not really mean by this all he seems to say for he had in front of him only Lord Brabourne's selected edition of the Letters, so edited that Bradley can reconcile his complacency in them with his statement that 'her novels make exceptionally peaceful reading. She troubles us neither with problems nor with painful emotions'. Quotations from her letters in the 1870 *Memoir* by Jane's nephew the Rev. J. E. Austen-Leigh, and in the *Life and Letters* published in 1913 by the next two generations of Austen-Leighs, were tactfully made in accordance with the Victorian feeling for presenting one's relative in the most favourable light in a biography, that is, as a conventionally estimable person. The same principle evidently decided Lord Brabourne to edit with a blue pencil the letters that he published in 1884—from his great-aunt Jane to his mother (when still Fanny Knight), to his mother's cousin Anna, and to his great-aunt Cassandra. The family biographies of Miss Austen from her brother Henry's Biographical Notice onwards, show a similar bias. When Dr. Chapman in 1932 printed for the first time in its entirety every letter of Jane Austen's he could find, the reaction of even Bloomsbury critics was one principally of shock and distaste (best seen in *Abinger Harvest* where Mr. E. M. Forster reprints his review); it looked for the moment as if there would be a similar slump in her reputation to that in Trollope's in consequence of the publication of his disillusioning *Autobiography* which proved too much for an age committed to the romantic theory of artistic Inspiration. But Janeites rallied round, declaring that the objections rested only on two or three jokes, lapses of taste and ill-humour such as we are all liable to in our correspondence,[2] and that far from these representing the tone of the Austen household it was probable that Cassandra wrote back reproving Jane.[3] The Austen stock recovered, and the Victorian account of her character and personality were reinstated.

Cassandra did not write back reprovingly, we may be sure, because it never occurred to her that such passages might be objectionable when she was censoring Jane's correspondence after her death or she would have destroyed such letters. Moreover the jokes are only the most striking examples of a tone and an attitude regularly adopted in Jane's correspondence with her sister. The letters, far from suiting with the Victorian notion of the Austen novels and

[2] *Jane Austen and her Art* by Mary M. Lascelles (1939).
[3] *Jane Austen : A Biography* by Elizabeth Jenkins (1938).

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their author's character, finally destroy that myth. They are therefore of real value to the literary critic, confirming the impression of the author he deduces from the novels and the interpretations he makes of the novels as works of art. The Letters emphasise the underlying intentions of the novels that have been ignored by literary criticism ; that they are not 'good' letters, as Mr. Forster and others have decided, is beside the point. Great letter-writers are mostly great bores. The letters that the literary critic is interested in are those that reveal an interesting mind.

Let us start with the simplest and most easily demonstrated point. Though no one any longer believes in the old account of her as a practically uneducated genius, yet the conventional account of Miss Austen as prim, demure, sedate, prudish and so on, the typical Victorian maiden lady, survives. This ignores the fact that she spent the first twenty-four years of her life in the eighteenth century and the rest in the Regency period. But the collected edition of the *Letters* brings this fact home to us, even if the novels have not done so already. Miss Austen is seen to have had no innate sense of propriety, as a clergyman's daughter of the next age could be expected to have. She jokes in the letters to her sister about having got tipsy last night, about fleas in the bed, about perspiring :

> 'What dreadful Hot weather we have ! It keeps one in a continual state of Inelegance' (1796)

about sexual relations :

> 'We plan having a steady Cook, and a young and giddy Housemaid, with a sedate, middle-aged Man, who is to undertake the double office of Husband to the former and sweetheart to the latter.—No children of course to be allowed on either side.' (1801)

and gives her sister a hint to see that the maid is kept from making advances to visiting nephews. The sisters still like to make the eighteenth century joke that any female acquaintance who has been ill must have been lying-in of an illegitimate child, and if a lady and gentleman are both absent from a party it is humorous to assume they are meeting secretly instead. The freedom of humour, in its separation of feeling from the occasion for a joke, is even reminiscent of Smollett, as in the well-known example that pained Mr. Forster, though it scarcely stands out in the letters :

> 'Mrs. Hall, of Sherbourne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright. I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband' (1798)

The free play of her mind on whatever came to her notice constantly produces unpredictable results ; for instance in 1813, she calls on a friend's daughter at a London finishing school, and tells Cassandra :

> 'I was shewn upstairs into a drawing-room, where she came to me, and the appearance of the room, so totally unschool-like

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amused me very much ; it was full of all the modern elegancies—and if it had not been for some naked Cupids over the Mantelpiece which must have been a fine study for Girls, one should never have smelt instruction'.

The sisters inherited from their mother what Mrs. Austen herself described as her 'sprack wit', a mental liveliness that evidently went with a preference for outspokeness and a contempt for prudery. Thus Jane writes :

> 'Your Anne is dreadful. But nothing offends me so much as the absurdity of not being able to pronounce the word *Shift*. I could forgive her any follies in English, rather than the Mock Modesty of that French word.' (1817)

And she writes casually and characteristically of a sister-in-law who 'neither looks nor feels well': 'Little Embryo is troublesome, I suppose.' Obviously she was neither puritanical nor Victorian—she thought freely and knew no reason why she should conceal what she thought. The idea of Good Taste for ladies with its paralysing effects had not yet been invented. This is the more apparent when we remember that these letters were meant to be read aloud by the recipient to whatever branch of the family she was staying with, or to the home circle if the writer was on a visit ; there are many indications that this was so in the text.

Miss Austen's absence of squeamishness on such subjects as sex is not however the conscious uninhibitedness cultivated by twentieth century lady novelists. It evidently arose quite naturally from acquaintance with life in a large and proliferating family, where friends and sisters-in-law produced a child a year and not infrequently died of it.[4] Life can only be taken as it comes and doesn't bear much thinking about. We get two good examples of this sobering knowledge of life in the *Letters*. The first is in 1798, when Jane, not yet twenty-three, has visited a sister-in-law expecting her first baby :

> 'I went to see Mary, who is still plagued with rheumatism, which she would be very glad to get rid of, and still more glad to get rid of her child, of whom she is heartily tired. . . I believe I never told you that Mrs. C. and Anne, late of Manydown, are both dead, and both died in childbed. We have not regaled Mary with this news.'

The second is in 1817, when she writes advising her favourite niece Fanny against marrying someone she is not sure about :

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[4]Of the five Austen brothers we know about (the sixth was 'weak in intellect' and nothing else is known of him but his name), four married twice while the fifth remained a widower after the death of his wife—whom Jane deeply admired and loved—from bearing her eleventh child, when Jane was thirty-two.

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> 'Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony, but I need not dwell on such arguments with *you*, pretty Dear, you do not want inclination . . . And then, by not beginning the business of Mothering quite so early in life, you will be young in Constitution, spirits, figure and countenance, while Mrs. —(of the same age) is growing old by confinements and nursing . . . Anna (another niece) has a bad cold, looks pale, and we fear something else. She has just weaned Julia.' Ten days later she writes again on the same subject to Fanny: 'Anna has not a chance of escape . . . Poor Animal, she will be worn out before she is thirty.—I am very sorry for her.—Mrs. Clement too is in that way again. I am quite tired of so many Children.—Mrs. Benn has a thirteenth.'

The advantage of seeing life unprotected by blinkers is apparent in the faculty it developed in her, that of taking stock of all kinds of experience and absorbing new kinds not only without being disconcerted or repelled but without having even to brace herself. We see her for instance taking even Don Giovanni in her stride, when up from the country on a visit to her brother Henry's household she has been on a round of theatres including Covent Garden opera:

> 'The girls still prefer "Don Juan"; and I must say that I have seen nobody on the stage who has been a more interesting character than that compound of cruelty and lust.' (1813)

Or she visits a prison:

> 'He went to inspect the gaol, as a visiting magistrate, and took me with him. I was gratified, and went through all the feelings which people must go through, I think, in visiting such a building.'

It is this poise that is behind the novels. What she can have found objectionable in *The Spectator*[5] is beyond conjecture.

Nor, after reading the *Letters*, can we fall into the common error of believing her to have lived the life of the country parsonage cut off from society and knowledge of the great world. Wherever she was she mixed with all kinds of society. She lived in Bath for four years besides paying earlier visits to her uncle resident there, she lived for two years in Southampton, and visited Lyme, Canterbury, Winchester and other frequented social centres as well as staying in London, where her brother Henry lived with his banking connections and whose wife, widow of a French count, collected round her a circle of French emigrées and cultivated musical society. The *Letters* tell us a good deal about all this. Many besides are written from great houses in the country or mention visits to them, the establishments of relatives or connections; and visits in those days, as we see in her novels, were of some duration. There is no

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[5] v. *Northanger Abbey* chapter V.

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sign that she led what is called a sheltered life. She knew very well what went on behind the façade of social decorum. The casual and indifferent references in the letters are more impressive evidence of this than greater stress on single incidents would be. Eccentric or merely immoral peers flit through the pages of these volumes—like their connection Lord Craven, whom Henry's wife reports on :

> 'She finds his manners very pleasing indeed. The little flaw of having a Mistress now living with him at Ashdown Park seems to be the only unpleasing circumstance about him.' But they are all 'on the most friendly terms.' (1801)

Calm notes on impropriety constantly appear :

> 'Mrs. W. has another son, and Lord Lucan has taken a Mistress . . . ' (1808).
>
> 'Mr. S. is married again . . . the Lady was governess to Sir Robert S.'s natural children . . . ' (1808).
>
> '*He* is as raffish in his appearance as I would wish every Disciple of Godwin to be.' (1801).
>
> 'I am proud to say that I have a very good eye at an Adultress, for . . . I fixed upon the right one from the first . . . She was highly rouged, and looked rather quietly and contentedly silly than anything else. Mrs. B. and two young women were of the same party, except when Mrs. B. thought herself obliged to leave them to run round the room after her drunken husband. His avoidance, and her pursuit, with the probable intoxication of both, was an amusing scene.' (1801)

There is the drama of Earle Harwood, R.N., one of the family of a neighbouring rector. He marries a low young woman of alleged improper life and 'lives in the most private manner imaginable at Portsmouth, without keeping a servant of any kind. What a prodigious innate love of virtue she must have, to marry under such circumstances' (1798). He then gets 'the appointment to a Prison ship at Portsmouth . . . he and his wife are to live on board for the future'. In 1799 Cassandra apparently sent Jane a description of Earle's wife, to which Jane replied : 'I cannot help thinking from your account of Mrs. E. H. that Earle's vanity has tempted him to invent the account of her former way of Life, that his triumph in securing her might be greater : I daresay she was nothing but an innocent Country Girl in fact'. Next year, 'Earle Harwood has been again giving uneasiness to his family, and talk to the Neighbourhood' by shooting himself, but not fatally and it is hoped not on purpose.

The world of the novels was not the world of Miss Austen's life but only a selection from it, made in order to facilitate certain intentions of the novelist ; that is the interesting and indisputable fact that emerges from the *Letters*. In these letters people have executions in the house owing to failure in business, or leave the neighbourhood because they can't pay their bills ; there are disputed

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wills and all kinds of law-suits ; women constantly die in childbed and when alive are shown to be preoccupied with nursing and educating their children, or if spinsters, with helping to rear and teach their little relatives, assisting the poor and nursing the sick and aged of their own family ; the Austens are on intimate terms with people of all classes and are not snobbish; Jane herself is always anxious about money and the cares of a household where the strictest economy was necessary–'vulgar economy' she calls it, having to worry because the bread or tea are not lasting as long as they should, because the only cooks they can afford to keep can't make a tolerable meal (Jane is ashamed because Capt. — who dropped in to dinner couldn't eat the underdone mutton), because the sweep is coming ('Depend upon my thinking of the chimney sweeper as soon as I wake tomorrow') or company which means torment :

> 'I wanted a few days quiet, and exemption from the Thought and contrivances which any sort of company gives . . . how good Mrs. West could have written such Books with all her family cares, is still more a matter of astonishment to me ! Composition seems to me Impossible with a Head full of Joints of Mutton and doses of rhubarb'.

In the letters there are many jottings of what might well have been material for novels, such as the story told above of Earle Harwood, or that of Mrs. Gunthorpe :

> 'Miss Jackson is married to young Mr. Gunthorpe, and is to be very unhappy. He swears, drinks, is cross, jealous, selfish and Brutal ;—the match makes *her* family miserable, and has occasioned *his* being disinherited.' (1807)

but they are the kind of novels she did not choose to write (unless she used the extract above for the history of Mrs. Price in *Mansfield Park*, where it is conspicuous and indeed unique in her work).

In her life too there were many tragic or dramatic incidents. As children she and her sister nearly died of 'a putrid fever' and her aunt who caught it from them did die ; her cousin and playmate Lady Williams, who had been married from Steventon Rectory, was killed six years later in a carriage accident ; her beloved friend Mrs. Lefroy, whose 'partial favour from my earliest years' Jane's touching verses four years after the disaster lovingly record, was thrown from her horse and killed on Jane's birthday ; her sister's fiancé died in the West Indies and Jane is conjectured[6] to have suffered a similar bereavement herself ; one night in her twenty-seventh year she accepted the proposal of the brother of her best friends, and in great agitation next morning broke off the engagement, though he was heir to a good estate ; her favourite sister-in-law died leaving an enormous family of young children, four other brothers lost their wives, one after her 'long and painful illness';

[6]On the strength of a family tradition based on a circumstantial story of Cassandra's and recorded by their niece.

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her closest companions (later they became her sisters-in-law) were grand-daughters of the famous beauty, 'the cruel Lady Craven', whose unnatural behaviour drove her daughters into eloping from their home; her rich aunt was the victim of a blackmailing charge of theft and spent nine months in custody awaiting trial, where Jane (aged twenty-three) and Cassandra might have joined her, it appears, if Mrs. Leigh Perrott had not decided to refuse their mother's offer since she could not 'let those elegant young women be inmates in a prison'; her cousin Eliza, of Anglo-Indian origin, married a French count in 1781, and led a romantic life at the French court till the Revolution when she escaped to England and took refuge at Steventon Rectory while her husband was guillotined; three years later she married Henry Austen, against the wishes of his family. There was certainly plenty of incident in Jane Austen's life and many varieties of experience for her to draw on in her family. Besides her own travels in the south and west of England she knew Oxford and the university world from her two brothers who were Oxonians, as well as from other connections there; another brother had made the grand tour and there were several well-travelled relatives; an aunt came from the West Indies, and a cousin went there; another aunt went out to India as a girl and married there, returning with her little daughter to remain in close contact with the Austens and to connect them with the trial of her benefactor Warren Hastings; one brother was a London banker, two were naval officers; and so on.

None of this tempting subject-matter is used by the novelist, and this is all the more remarkable when we remember that our knowledge of all other women novelists shows that the strength of their stories lies solely in being personal and reminiscent of the lives they saw around them, often closely autobiographical. There was a century's tradition of women novelists to keep her in countenance if she had wanted to write novels around such subjects. And that she could write well on almost anything the *Letters* prove. To ascribe the lack of dramatic incident in the novels to the author's humdrum experience and confined outlook is clearly wrong; the novels are limited in scope and subject by deliberate intention. The *Letters* therefore prove that Jane Austen was the kind of novelist she was because she was consciously restricting her work for a given purpose, in order to concentrate on what seemed to her most worth writing about, to convey her deepest interests and to express some things that seemed to her important.

There is a similar difference between the vocabulary and idiom of the *Letters* and that of the novels, which shows that the latter were not dashed off as gaily as is generally assumed. There is much greater freedom of expression in the correspondence, while the language of the novels, though depending a good deal on having speech-forms behind it and making frequent use of colloquialisms, is always restrained—the 'trollopy-looking servant-girl' at Mrs. Price's in *Mansfield Park* stands out as if an oversight, certainly it is the only such phrase in all the novels, though in the *Letters* it

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would not attract attention. The vivacity of the novels is controlled, it is art, whereas that of the letters is the careless high-spirits of conversation—as when she writes to her niece, urging her to reject a suitor:

> 'Think of his Principles, think of his Father's objections, of want of Money, of a coarse Mother, of Brothers and Sisters like Horses, of sheets sewn across, etc.'

or of a disagreeable sister-in-law:

> 'But still she is in the main *not* a liberal-minded Woman, and as to this reversionary Property's amending that part of her Character, expect it not my dear Anne—too late, too late in the day.'

She withheld from the novels the licence of language and prose-style and the range and strength of feeling that we see her to have had at her disposal in her correspondence. Similarly we learn with surprise from the *Letters* that she had many interests which do not appear in the novels—for example, she was fond of history and even such subjects as military history and tactics.

But the questions raised here must be left for consideration in a later essay. We must go on to enquire what the letter-writer and the novelist have in common. The letters, I said in the first of these essays, were an indispensable stage in the production of the novels. We see in the *Letters* the novelist writing steadily and for an audience, and an audience which had imposed a certain attitude and tone on the writer and which demanded certain kinds of information. When Jane Austen writes to the next generation, her nieces or nephews, she writes warmly, kindly and sympathetically: their reminiscences all agree that she was the ideal aunt, and her letters to them (though not all those about them) corroborate this. The letters to her friends are also ordinarily pleasant and imply an amiable outlook. Those to Cassandra and sometimes to her brothers are notably different. There is little affectionate sentiment—that was understood no doubt and left for personal intercourse—the letters, on which the not inconsiderable postage had to be paid by the recipient, were to convey information and it is information about social matters they wanted and received, about functions, family events, and personalities, especially new ones. Characterisation of new acquaintances plays a prominent and obviously acceptable part in their letter-writing. In analysing the novels before I showed that the characteristic vein of the writer is marked by acid comment on character and cynical estimate of motive. Now these give the distinguishing tone of the letters to Cassandra and the Steventon circle; no doubt it was the tone of family intercourse, arising in the schoolroom over the family jokes (as we can see in the manuscript volumes), and not surprising in a family conscious of unusual gifts[7] and cherishing a clannish spirit.[8] Their sense of difference was intensified by their all being educated at home, by their highly critical and vigorous-minded mother[9] and by

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their pronounced taste for literature (to which two of the brothers added a scholarly-critical attitude to the use of language). The sisters, without husband or child to mitigate the adolescent hardness and sharpness of outlook, were still more conscious of being different and superior; they formed a clique within an élite.[10] And Cassandra was the dominating character in this alliance. Their nephew wrote in his *Memoir of Jane Austen*:

> 'Their sisterly affection for each other could scarcely be exceeded. Perhaps it began on Jane's side with the feeling of deference natural to a loving child towards a kind elder sister. Something of this feeling always remained; and even in the maturity of her powers, and in the enjoyment of increasing success, she would still speak of Cassandra as of one wiser and better than herself . . . They were not exactly alike. Cassandra's was the colder and calmer disposition; she was always prudent and well-judging, but with less outward demonstration of feeling and less sunniness of temper than Jane possessed'.

His sister Anna contributed the information that Cassandra was the more equable while Jane, who could be very grave as well as uproariously funny, was given to ups and downs. None of Cassandra's letters to her sister are known, but it is suggestive that Jane writes in the one tone to her and that, acknowledging a letter from her sister, she declares: 'You are indeed the finest comic writer of the present age'. The letter Cassandra wrote on the second day after Jane's death, to their niece, reveals an extraordinary nature whose iron quality perhaps explains something in the younger sister's attitudes (*e.g.* 'I *have* lost such a treasure, such a sister,

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[7]Eliza de Feuillide, a sophisticated person, after eleven years of marriage and residence abroad, reported on visiting them that 'Henry is certainly endowed with uncommon abilities, which indeed seem to have been bestowed, though in a different way, upon each member of this family.'

[8]Their nephew wrote: 'There was so much that was agreeable and attractive in this family party that its members may be excused if they were inclined to live somewhat too exclusively within it.'

[9]Mrs. Austen is described as 'shrewd and acute, high-minded and determined, with a strong sense of humour' and great energy. Her correspondence illustrates these qualities, and some of Jane's tastes and prejudices too, e.g. after a visit to London: 'I was not so happy as to see my nephew Weaver—suppose he was hurried in time, as I think everyone is in town; 'tis a sad place, I would not live in it on any account, one has not time to do one's duty either to God or man.'

[10]Their niece Anna wrote of them: 'They seemed to lead a life to themselves within the general family life which was shared only by each other. I will not say their true, but their *full* feelings and opinions were known only to themselves. They alone fully understood what each had suffered and felt and thought.'

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such a friend . . . I loved her only too well—not better than she deserved, but I am conscious that my affection for her made me sometimes unjust to and negligent of others; and I can acknowledge, more than as a general principle, the justice of the Hand which has struck this blow. You know me too well to be at all afraid that I should suffer materially from my feelings . . .').

The novelist's tone is seen, through the *Letters*, to be not simply the self-protection of the sensitive person against the world, but something shared and expected, a matter of common assumptions that could not be revised and that she could only escape in relations that started on a different basis, as those of an aunt to children or grown-up nieces. So much a habit was this tone and manner that she adopts it even when completely unsuitable, where only our knowledge of the facts from other sources shows that she intended to be playful merely or even to express gratitude or admiration in such an awkward convention as to convey the opposite sense. She was not unconscious of this and sometimes pulls herself up when she has fallen into it to an unsuitable recipient, as when in a letter to a brother at sea, after such a piece of characterisation of a cousin's wife as would be natural in a letter to Cassandra, she adds 'This is an ill-natured sentiment to send all over the Baltic'.

The assumptions were, first, that the outside world was inferior to Steventon Rectory and their circle. Contempt is freely implied for their neighbours' lack of intellectual interests, the latter's stupidity being always assumed :

> 'The C.s are at home, and are reduced to read.'
>
> 'The Miss M.'s are as civil and as silly as usual.'
>
> 'She has an idea of your being remarkable lively, therefore get ready the proper selection of adverbs and due scraps of Italian and French.'
>
> 'Miss Beaty is good-humour itself, and does not seem much besides.'
>
> ' . . . among so many readers or retainers of books as we have in Chawton . . . '
>
> 'I cannot anyhow continue to find people agreeable . . . '
>
> 'As to Agreeableness, she is much like other people.'

Inferiority of manners is constantly noted too, as implying something more radical :

> 'Mrs. B. called here on Saturday. She is a large, ungenteel Woman, with self-satisfied and would-be elegant manners.'
>
> 'They (male visitors) are very good-natured you know and civil and all that—but not particularly superfine.'
>
> 'Like other young ladies she is considerably genteeler than her parents ; she is very conversable in a common way ; I do not perceive wit or genius, but she has sense and some degree of taste, and her manners are very engaging. She seems to like people rather too easily.'

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and still more inferiority of standards—other people are snobbish, ill-humoured, affected or insincere, purse-proud or mean about money, meddlesome or over-bearing, effusive or heartless :

> 'I rather wish they may have the Curacy. It will be an amusement for Mary to superintend their Household management, and abuse them for expense.'
>
> 'I would not give much for Mr. Rice's chance of living at Deane : he builds his hope, I find, not upon anything that his mother has written, but upon the effect of what he has written himself. He must write a great deal better than those eyes indicate if he can persuade a perverse and narrow-minded woman to oblige those whom she does not love.'

If not guilty of any of these defects then they fail to satisfy the Austen's high standard of cheerfulness and stoicism in the face of tribulation. The scrutiny the *Letters* shows directed on outsiders (even on sisters-in-law and aunts-by-marriage) is more than critical, it is hostile, disapproving, and incipiently contemptuous :

> 'My Aunt . . . looks about with great diligence and success for Inconvenience and Evil.'
>
> 'Miss Holder and I adjourned after tea into the inner Drawing room to look over Prints and talk pathetically. She is very unreserved and very fond of talking of her deceased brother and sister, whose memories she cherishes with an enthusiasm which tho' perhaps a little affected is not unpleasing.'

are fair samples. Even a brother may degenerate under the influence of marriage, as Jane suggests in this reference to her brother James :

> 'I am sorry and angry that his Visit should not give one more pleasure ; the company of so good and so clever a Man ought to be gratifying in itself ;—but his Chat seems all forced, his Opinions on many points too much copied from his Wife's, and his time here is spent I think in walking about the House and banging the doors, or ringing the bell for a glass of water.'

The fact that outside her own circle there was immorality of various kinds fitted in here—being immoral was part of other people's inferiority. The unfeeling treatment of a Lydia Bennett or a Maria Rushworth that readers of the novels complain of is the result of the letter-writer's unsympathetic attitude to all who lapse from an implied standard of great severity. She could believe it a reasonable standard because it was shared by her own group. Inside that group she was evidently the lovable and sweet-natured person the family traditions agree in describing.

Finally, the hostility of this world to the Austens and what they stand for is also assumed—the world is inferior and therefore malicious. We have probably all noticed that conversation is liable to be spiced with malice, especially in a confined society, and that it

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is a tendency of human nature to enjoy the misfortunes of others. Nevertheless there are opposite impulses and counterbalancing virtues. It is not normal to believe only in a malicious and hostile attitude on the part of our immediate neighbours and of indifferent strangers alike. But this is an understanding between Jane Austen and her sister abundantly witnessed by the *Letters* :

> 'Mrs. Portman is not much admired in Dorsetshire ; the good-natured world, as usual, extolled her beauty so highly, that all the neighbourhood have had the pleasure of being disappointed.
>
> 'Ch. Powlett gave a dance on Tuesday, to the great disturbance of all his neighbours, of course, who, you know, take a most lively interest in the state of his finances, and live in hopes of his being soon ruined.'
>
> ' . . . his wife is discovered to be everything that the neighbourhood could wish her, silly and cross as well as extravagant.'
>
> 'Whenever I fall into misfortune, how many jokes it ought to furnish to my acquaintance in general, or I shall die dreadfully in their debt for entertainment.'

Of her friends' father who is ill :

> 'Poor man ! his life is so useful, his character so respectable and worthy, that I really believe there was a good deal of sincerity in the general concern expressed on his account.'

The lack of sincerity in ordinary social intercourse is clearly one of the sources of irritation in her relations with the outside world. New acquaintances are looked upon with suspicion and 'civility' is a term of pejorative implications because it is assumed to impose hypocrisy. For instance :

> 'In consequence of a civil note that morning from Mrs. Clement, I went with her and her husband in their Tax-cart—civility on both sides ; *I* would rather have walked, and no doubt *they* must have wished I had.'

Similarly she writes with characteristic irony of an acquaintance : 'We were all delight and cordiality of course'. This extract about callers in 1807 is representative of a good deal of the kind scattered throughout the *Letters* :

> 'I suppose they must be acting by the orders of Mr.— in this civility, as there seems no other reason for their coming near us. They will not come often, I dare say. They live in a handsome style and are rich and she seemed to like to be rich, and we gave her to understand that we were far from being so ; she will soon feel therefore that we are not worth her acquaintance.'

And the continual irony at clichés of feeling and expression, at conventional exaggerations, the impatience with anything that

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might be related to cant, is associated with this irritation.[11] It is always coming up in the novels.

In all these respects the *Letters* chime in with the novels. These feelings are the groundwork of the novels and after reading the *Letters* we can see more distinctly the part the Austen attitude played in making the novels what they are. The letters between the sisters show them to have had a sense of difference from the world outside their immediate family and few chosen friends; it was not that they were ignorant of it or shy of it, but that they had too much penetration to be comfortable in society and knew too much about the people they had to live among. There was not enough elbow-room, they could leave home only to pay a visit to another home, and social decorum imposed intolerable restraints and hypocrisies on their intercourse with others, they felt. The blessedness of having a few people who endorse one's standards, speak one's language and can be counted on, the necessity for making one's own private society, was well understood by Jane Austen, and the *Letters* prove that in this respect she was happy. Her immediate family, Martha Lloyd, the favourite niece, Fanny, when she grew up, the three Misses Bigg of Manydown, formed such a refuge for her:

> 'In another week I shall be at home—and then, my having been at Godmersham will seem like a Dream—The Orange Wine will want our Care soon.—But in the meantime for Elegance and Ease and Luxury; the Hatters and Milles' dine here today—and I shall eat Ice and drink French wine, and be above vulgar Economy. Luckily the pleasures of Friendship, of unreserved Conversation, of similarity of Taste and Opinions, will make good amends for Orange Wine.' (1808).

and five years later she writes to Cassandra:

> 'In a few hours you will be transported to Manydown and then for Candour and Comfort and Coffee and Cribbage.'

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[11] *Cf.* 'I am glad you liked my lace, and so are you, and so is Martha, and we are all glad together. I have got your cloak home, which is quite delightful—as delightful at least as half the circumstances which are called so.' (1799).

' . . . in short, has a great many more than all the cardinal virtues (for the cardinal virtues in themselves have been so often possessed that they are no longer worth having). . . ' (1804).

and her dislike of the Evangelical Movement. This extreme sensitiveness ranges from jokes like 'Miss X. and I are very thick, but I am the thinnest of the two' to the perfectly serious epitaph on a friend: 'Many a girl on early death has been praised into an Angel I believe, on slighter pretensions to Beauty, Sense and Merit than Marianne'.

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'Candour', that key-word in the novelist's vocabulary, is strictly speaking the opposite of censoriousness, putting the best interpretation on everything (it was to reverse its meaning by George Eliot's time). But in the Austen letters and novels it implies much more, it is an ideal that ordinary society is incapable of in its intercourse. To be candid is to be charitable, sincere and one's real or best self. In Jane Austen's scheme her élite of family and friends are the ideal of the society she belongs to, in which Candour and not malice is the regulating impulse, where warm affections reign ('Tenderness' is another key-word) and good conversation is the chief pleasure ; we remember Anne Elliot's definition of good society, to which her cousin objects : 'That is not good company—that is the best'.

For the interesting point for literary criticism is that the letters led to the novels. Her taste for sharing her observations on human nature with her family did not stop at letter-writing and conversation or even at the satires and parodies of the manuscript volumes and the early form of *Northanger Abbey*. And the kind of interest in people and life that the letters show did not even produce the kind of novels we should deduce from the *Letters*. She had this passion for examining people's lives and in every detail—as she notes in the *Letters* :

> 'Mary and I went to the Liverpool Museum and the British Gallery and I had some amusement at each tho' my preference for Men and Women always inclines me to attend more to the company than the sight.' (1811)

and a few years earlier, demanding exact details of some affair from her sister :

> 'You know how interesting the purchase of a sponge-cake is to me.'

Thus the *Letters* are full of character-sketches made for their own sake and for the amusement of the home circle, but they often reappear in a recognizable form in the novels ; such little studies as that of the M.P. she met on a visit in 1813 :

> 'Now I must speak of *him*, and I like him very much. I am sure he is clever, and a man of taste. He got a volume of Milton last night, and spoke of it with warmth. He is quite an M.P., very smiling, with an exceeding good address and readiness of language. I am rather in love with him. I dare say he is ambitious and insincere. He has a wide smiling mouth, and very good teeth.'

which suggests Mr. Walter Elliot, or Harriet Moore's husband who suggests Mr. John Knightley or Miss Milles and her mother who suggest Miss Bates and hers—the list is endless.

This interest in how other people felt, behaved, passed their time, looked and spoke, what they thought and said about each other, was her great asset as a novelist. But when such an interest

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goes with a fundamental irritation with the social actuality and a habit of looking for its shortcomings only, we should expect works of fiction in the vein of Mr. Somerset Maugham. That Jane Austen's novels are so thoroughly different from Mr. Maugham's is a tribute to the congenial circle she was born into and gathered round her and to the strength of the positive standards they shared with her. What these contributed to her literary work will be discussed in another article.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

TOWARDS A CONCEPTION OF MUSICAL TRADITION (II):

VOICE AND DANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

'There is not any Musicke of Instruments whatsoever, comparable to that which is made of the voyces of Men, where the voyces are good, and the same well sorted and ordered. The better the voyce is, the meeter it is to honour and serve God therewith; and the voyce of Man is chiefly to be imployed to that ende. *Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.*'

William Byrd.

'It would seem that dancing came in being at the beginning of all things, and was brought to life together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the choral dance of the constellations, and in the planets and fixed stars, their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony.'

Lucian.

'It is Proportion that beautifies everything, the whole Universe consists of it, and Musicke is mesured by it.'

Orlando Gibbons.

I.

In considering the evolution of mediaeval music we first discussed the derivation of the natural melody formulae from the acoustical facts of song, examining the growth of the five-tone (pentatonic) formulae and then the growth of the seven-tone ones (collectively grouped under the heading of 'the modal system'):

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here we found the melodic material, the framework within which composers worked more or less up to the seventeenth century. We then went on to discuss mediaeval monody and the birth of polyphony, stressing how the mediaeval conception of the technique differed essentially from that with which we are familiar. Now the idioms of the sixteenth century are a natural evolution from mediaeval polyphony in somewhat the same way as the Christian Renaissance was a modification of mediaeval attitudes. It is important that we should realize that the greatest music of the sixteenth century is still much more mediaeval in approach than is, say, Shakespeare: but it is also important that we should realize that the great technical achievement of the sixteenth century—what one broadly calls the reconciliation of the 'horizontal' attitude with the 'vertical'—cannot be separated from considerations that one must call sociological. The differences between Palestrina and Perotin, in point of approach, are no less significant than the likenesses; and if they do not, of course, necessarily imply 'progress', they do imply an inevitable evolution. In order to understand this evolution we must first consider in general terms the relationship between song and dance; for this is the mainspring of sixteenth century polyphony, just as the relationship between song and speech had been the generative impetus behind the evolution of mediaeval monody.

In any healthy society music will inevitably be centred in song and dance, because here music has its clearest social implications. In an organically musical society there will be two main channels for musical expression. One is that the individual will himself sing (monody) and then that several individuals will sing together on equal terms (polyphony), the contact with language in each case providing the explicit relation to 'life': the other is that music will be used to accompany dancing feet. Both polyphony and dance music are in essence communal activities; and virtually up to the seventeenth century all music was communal and contemporary, and either religious or domestic. It depended on active participation between composer, performers and audience; even if the audience in church didn't actually take part in the singing at least it effected, or was supposed to effect, a spiritual participation. The idea of sitting in rows and listening solemnly to music 'for its own sake' would have seemed absurd to Byrd or Palestrina; either one made music oneself or one listened to it as homage to God. Byrd called one of his works 'songes of sundrie natures, some of gravitie and others of myrth, fit for all companies and voyces . . . for the delight of all such as take pleasure in the exercise of that Art', and the emphasis is upon the exercise. Music for him was an *activity*; he did not think of it primarily as a means of expressing the state of his soul (though it was such unavoidably). This is a fact which is not without bearing on the integrity of sixteenth century technique; the music was solidly written 'through' because, as a social activity, it had to be consistently interesting for all the performers.

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Now despite their social inter-relations there are nonetheless important distinctions between the technique of voice and dance. Dance music is and must be measured music. Depending on the tread of human feet it entails symmetry and the balance of clause against clause. Therefore it entails also the idea of finality, the resolution of tension, which is musically incarnated in the conception of the leading note and harmonic cadence. This is why during the mediaeval ages dance music was most often written in our common major scale—actually of course the Ionian mode,[1] instinctively selected out of all the possible modes because it is the only one (except the Lydian which is harmonically treacherous owing to its imperfect tritonal fourth) which has a semitonal leading note ; and has therefore the ability to formulate a clear harmonic cadence. Much early dance music consists harmonically of the simplest grouping of dominant-tonic cadences, the cadences corresponding with the strong metrical accents (cf. many of the small dance pieces of Farnaby) ; and when you've played one such phrase over and answered it by another, there's nothing to do but repeat the whole thing. As long as dance music is actually used to accompany dancing that's no matter—you play the piece over and over until the dancers get tired, which is of course what actually happens with the vulgarized if (with its rudimentary conventional modulations) slightly more sophisticated dance music of today. But clearly the only way you can extend such a piece musically is by *contrasting* one such harmonic cadence phrase with another having a *different* harmonic centre ; and in the vocal modal system this is difficult if not impossible (for reasons which we shall be examining in our next article). To do this you need the conception of key-relationship and temperament ; and when once you've achieved that the structural principles of the musical shape of the diatonic sonata—the contrast of symmetrical phrases and the tension between harmonic cadences with their resultant drama—follows in its wake. Mediaeval Europe and the sixteenth century just weren't interested in this dramatic conception; and so as long as dance music was primarily for dancing to it remained in a subservient musical position and incapable of musical development. Four-square harmonized dance tunes and musical declamation existed all through the Middle Ages in popular secular music and latently perhaps in some troubadour songs ; but though they were the necessary background to musical culture they were not its central manifestation. It is not a question of the relative

[1] I use the conventional terminology though it is disputed by some authorities, notably Herman Reichenbach who regards the Ionian and Aeolian as unauthentic modes more or less equivalent to diatonic major and minor. In studying the general evolution of European melodic idioms, however, I think it is more convenient to consider the vocally intonated major and minor as being implicit in the modal system under the label of Ionian and Aeolian, and to reserve the terms major and minor for the instrumental tempered diatonic modes of later times.

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precedence of polyphony and homophony. The fact that the Church in the early Middle Ages officially banned the Ionian mode (they called it the *modus lascivus*!) because of the harmonic potentialities which inevitably associated it with secular dancing, would suggest that there must for centuries have been a flourishing tradition of homophonic music, even if the recently investigated Welsh bardic music did not provide explicit evidence of it. But this bardic music, which is entirely harmonic in ethos and restricted, despite slightly pentatonic influence, to the harmonic major and minor modes, is formally limited to the strophic structures of variation or rondeau (corresponding perhaps to a verbal text); though the harmonic conception is clearly defined, and quite distinct from the polyphonically derived harmonic regulations of the fifteenth century, there is no modulation (this would have necessitated the retuning of the harp) and no dramatic 'development' in the modern sense, though of course it doesn't follow that the music is therefore deficient in passion. (The 'strict' pieces were restricted to tonic and dominant harmonies). Undoubtedly, as Peter Crossley-Holland has suggested, secular monody, polyphony and the bardic homophony were inter-related; but the full implications of homophonic technique come into their own only when the dance links up, on the stage, with the explicit 'human emotions' of a more humanistic, less religious, society.

If the dance tends to finality and symmetry the voice singing alone will, on the other hand, follow the natural conditions, described in our preceding article, laid down by the capabilities of the human vocal organs, but it has no *externally* imposed restrictions. We have only to compare the most representative English folk-songs with the dance-tunes to see how, in particular, song is free as to rhythm, although it may of course make use of the human instinct for proportion. Habitually it strives to avoid finality, hence the prevalence in monophonic music of the so-called 'flattened leading note', a concept which is contradictory in so far as the leading note is an essentially harmonic idea, so that it is wrong to suggest that the folk singer or troubadour flattens a tone which would 'normally' be otherwise. (Perhaps the naturalness of the flattened leading note is the melodic explanation of the very beautiful harmonic oscillations between triads of C and B flat in Bull's *Jewel*, and the general fondness of the virginalists for the juxtaposition of phrases a tone apart). Monophonic song is anyhow habitually fluid, and we can say that all through the sixteenth century monophonic principles of melodic construction prevailed in so far as melody was conceived from two complementary aspects: it was, to use Byrd's phrase, 'framed to the life of the words', arising directly out of speech rhythm and verbal inflection (the poetry, says Byrd to his patron, was so admirable and vital that he had only to go around a while saying the verses over to himself and then suddenly, 'in some inexplicable way'—we may call it genius—the melodic lines were there in his mind, fully formed, framed to the life of the words); but also it sought to sublimate speech rhythm to the condition of lyrical

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song. The composers achieved this by methods that were not so very different from those of the great monodists, as we can see from the soaring melismatic passages in (say) Byrd and Dowland which, so often arising out of the implications of the verbal text, preserve an unbroken tradition from the tropes of plainsong. Yet nonetheless their methods *are* different from those of the monodists; and the difference consists in the necessity to make such lyrical lines consistent with a coherent harmonic system. For since modalism is in essence melodic and monophonic, it becomes susceptible of harmonic treatment only in so far as it is transmuted into something else; (there is, as Morris said, no such thing as 'modal harmony'). As we shall see, the variety and subtlety of these transmutations become, for the sixteenth century composer, a source of great strength.

In considering the birth of polyphony in our earlier article we saw how difficulties arose in attempting to combine two or more fluid 'vocal' lines together, difficulties that inevitably entailed mensuration if the singers were not to be left at odds with each other. At first a very complicated and somewhat arbitrary system of measurement was imposed on the polyphonic structure but composers of the thirteenth century, monophonically trained, rapidly freed themselves from the rigid restrictions and developed a polyphonic technique which triumphed by overriding what the text-books call 'harmonic propriety'. They preferred melodic independence to harmonic congruity; and accepting the appropriate values and judging the music on its own terms, we saw that in general the more triadic music of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries represented a decline from the representative organization of the thirteenth century motet. It was not until the latter half of the fifteenth century and the great age of the sixteenth that the opposing forces were resolved, and a music achieved which preserved the maximum amount of melodic independence in each component line while at the same time implying a coherent harmonic scheme and the latent metrical organization without which harmonic coherence would be impossible. The sixteenth century composers' 'horizontal' thinking is inseparable from its 'vertical' implications. The technique of writing melodic music for voices in concert here reaches a perfection which corresponds to what was perhaps the most crucial phase of European history.

Although this 'sixteenth century compromise' was influenced (as we shall see) by the interaction of vocal polyphony with dance music, it could not be a reconciliation of the principles of voice and dance such as gives Bach's work its unique position in our musical history, because the implications of dance music were as yet uninvestigated, and could not be investigated until the development of temperament. This is clearly noticeable in sixteenth century dance music itself, which divides itself into two main classifications. Either the dance pieces are very simple symmetrical structures, triadically harmonised, which, like the tunes that were actually danced to, are brief and incapable of extension (cf. most of the

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small lute pieces and the short virginal dances) ; or, if they are extended, they are treated in an essentially vocal and melodic fashion and are in fact instrumental motets, with certain decorative additions arising out of the nature of finger technique. The big pavans and galliards of Gibbons and Bull have just ceased to be dances. With their fluid generation, their polyphonic lines crystallized around the ground tune in an instrumental version of the early vocal *in nomine*, their modal vocalism and overlapping phrases, they are a vocal transformation of instrumental dance form which sounds as well, if not better, on the organ as on the more percussive virginals. Many of the greatest folk-song variations (Bull's *Walsingham*, Gibbon's *Hunt's Up* and to a lesser degree Farnaby's *Woodycock* and *Pawles Wharfe*) use a somewhat similar technique, absorbing the primitive 'shape' of the insistent repetition of the symmetrical tune into fluid polyphonic procedure. Two of the most fundamental of musical shapes, the dance and the variation, are here given a textural interpretation. There's nothing odd about it. The sixteenth century attitude, which entailed the sixteenth century resources, did not make an instrumental or shape interpretation possible ; the piece had to be developed polyphonically or not at all. We cannot say that sixteenth century composers would have written extended shape compositions if they'd been able to (if they'd had the necessary resources) : if they'd wanted them, the resources would have appeared. Inventions like temperament correspond to a changing need in the human consciousness. The need makes the invention, not the invention the need : (cries of the 'if-only-Byrd-had-had-equal-temperament' order are about as foolish as deploring the fact that the horse hasn't got pneumatic tyres). We shall see this need gradually emerging as we examine the actual nature of the idiom, of the way 'the sixteenth century compromise' worked out in practice.

For it is a fact that the triumph of sixteenth century technique inevitably implied the disintegration of the attitudes which had made it possible. The compromise couldn't be effected without the introduction of a device—*musica ficta*—which meant the end of modalism, just as the contemporary civilization derived much of its strength from the Middle Ages while being imbued with the new humanistic attitudes which were the Middle Ages' destruction : indeed perhaps it was only those more conscious attitudes which made the complete realization of the old order possible. If we associate vocal polyphony broadly with the mediaeval attitudes and the new homophonic technique with the humanistic tendencies that emerged with the Renaissance we can see that 'the sixteenth century compromise' has a technical significance which in sociological terms can be paralleled by the position of a Christian humanist like Sir Thomas More. More and Palestrina and Byrd were all creations of the spiritual temper of their time ; and the sympathies of them all, though divided, were on the whole with the losing side. In More's *Utopia* music was to return to the position it had come closest to occupying in the Middle Ages ; although it was to be intensely

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humanistic it was to be so not self-expressively or exhibitionistically, but ritualistically, in a manner which implied the closest connection between music and behaviour.[2] Actually music was never again to occupy so purely religious a position outside some of the cantatas of Bach; and from their own point of view (which was that of their age) Bach's sons were quite justified in thinking their father a bit of an old fogey.

II.

An apparently small matter—the manner in which the melodic interval of the fourth becomes thought of as an harmonic discord requiring resolution in the more harmonic third—is a technical epitome of the 'compromise'. But most clearly it is manifested in the 'confusion as to scale' in sixteenth century music which so puzzled the nineteenth century editors. Theoretically the melodic material available to composers was that of modal monody, with each part restricted to the natural compass of the octave, proceeding by conjunct motion and leaps of the perfect and imperfect consonances (usually not more than two of them in the same direction consecutively, otherwise the line grows ungainly and unvocal); and theoretically the harmony was restricted to the simple triads and their inversions which had been established through fifteenth century *faulx bourdon*. But the strength of the idiom depended on the fact that these two aspects of melody and harmony were then more interdependent than they've ever been before or since in musical history. For instance, the developing feeling for the harmonic or 'vertical' aspect brings with it the development of the notion of cadence and the resolution of tension. This leads to the device of *musica ficta*—first the anti-tritonal B flat and F sharp to ensure fluid and consonant linear writing, then the habitual sharpening of the seventh in cadences, in order to provide the harmonic resolution which the vocal mode (except the Ionian) didn't need and hadn't got. This in turn effected the whole concept of

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2' . . . Then they sing prayses unto God, whiche they intermixe with instruments of musick, for the most parte of other fassions than theis that we use in this parte of the worlde. And like as some of owrs bee muche sweter then theirs, so some of theirs doo farre passe owrs. But in one thynge dowteles they goo exceedinge farre beyond us. For all their musicke, both that they playe upon instrumentes, and that they singe with man's voyce, doth so resemble and expresse naturall affections; the sownd and tune is so applied and made agreable to the thynge; that whether it bee a prayer, or els a dytty of gladnesse, of patience, of trouble, of mournynge, or of anger, the fassion of the melodye doth so represente the meaning of the thynge, that it doth wonderfully move, stirre, pearce and enflame the hearers myndes.' *Utopia*, Book II. This is extremely close to the famous descriptions of the effect of music in Aristotle's Politics and Plato's Republic. More probably had these passages in mind.

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line in the period, and we have the characteristically plastic inflectional chromaticism which in a more fluid and subtle (*not* 'confused') fashion is a prototype of our significantly titled 'melodic' minor scale (only with the sharpened third, as well as sixth and seventh, ascending, all of them flattened in the descent). This kind of inflectionalism was particularly prevalent in the English school, and in every case the plasticity of the tonality was its great strength. Thus were achieved the continual transitions of tonal centre which twentieth century composers found it so rewarding to study. The pure vocal style of Palestrina does not employ this form of inflectionalism nearly so much, for he keeps very closely to the modes and does not usually use any chromatic alterations other than those found in plainsong. But even with him chromatic alteration is usually the result of a temporary dominance of harmonic thought; he uses F sharp, G sharp and C sharp almost always to achieve the clear harmonic major triads which he prefers to have in all the key-positions of his tonal structure. This is particularly so in cadence, of course, with which the sixteenth century modulatory conception is inseparably associated. This does not mean that modal cadences ceased to exist. For instance Palestrina adheres to the pure Phrygian cadence with flat seventh, both by itself and in combination with plagal (sub-dominant) cadences. Jeppeson significantly points out that in the motet *Peccantem me quotidie* at the words 'Timor mortis conturbat me' Palestrina expresses the utmost depths of horror by employing D sharp in the Phrygian cadence. For him, 'this chromatic signified a *conturbatio* of that musical system which was for him the sole correct one.' Sixteenth century technique depended essentially on this dual tonal perspective (there is, we shall see, a rhythmic parallel), even though it was ultimately to prove the end of the modal system.[3]

If the harmonic aspects influenced the melody the inflectional melody literally made the harmony,[4] and here we can see how it is ultimately through the sixteenth century rhythmic conception that the supreme reconciliation of the maximum of melodic independence with harmonic propriety was achieved. The clearest, because most extreme, example is the famous (or to the eighteenth and nineteenth

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[3] *Cf.* Gerard Manley Hopkins: 'I look on modulation as corruption, the undoing of diatonic style. What they call the key of the dominant, viz. one in which the fourth of the tonic is sharpened, I say is not the key of the dominant (which is in another mode than the key of the tonic and has no leading-note) but the key of the tonic misplaced and transposed. I believe that — and I would give diametrically opposite names to the same things: what he calls variety I call sameness, because modulation reduces all the rich diatonic keyboard with its six or seven authentic, not to speak of plagal, modes, to one dead level of major; where he finds tameness I find variety, specific quality (not of key, which is not specific, but) of mode. Here, however, I must allow, is the hitch. For if I am right in theory, in practice I am bound to give that variety by my own

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centuries notorious) device of false relation whereby two or three parts, ending a phrase, form the cadence with the sharpened third of the semitonal leading note while another line overlaps with a new phrase which by conjunct motion or one of the consonant leaps, sings the natural third either simultaneously or in close juxtaposition: (the inflectional scale, that is, may be independent of the harmony of the other parts). Similarly Byrd's augmented sixths (there's a fine example in the motet *Tristitia et anxietas*), augmented seconds (see *Ecce virgo*), diminished sevenths and combinations of minor sixths with major thirds (there's a lovely example in the Agnus of the 5 part Mass) are the result of a semitonal inflection in one line while the other parts proceed modally. A consequence of good part-writing, they indicate how composition has become this extremely subtle, almost intuitive, dualistic phenomenon whereby, if you're a good composer, the vocal inflections of your lines coincide with the point to which harmonic poignancy is appropriate. False relations and chromatic intervals are essentially the result of *melodic* procedure in this music; that their *harmonic* effect was nonetheless increasingly recognized by composers is testified by the degree to which they associated them with passages of peculiar melancholy, anguish or intensity in the texts which they set. (Consider too Byrd's famous address of 1588 to the 'Benigne Reader: In the expressing of these Songes, if ther happen to be any Jarre or Dissonance, blame not the Printer, who (I doe assure thee) through his grete paines and diligence doth heere deliver to thee a perfect and true Coppie.')

But not only in such exceptional passages, but habitually, sixteenth century harmonic practice depended on rhythmic independence and tonal fluidity. To explain this Morris used the helpful, if homely metaphor of a number of persons, each representing a melodic line, walking abreast. Let us say there are four people and that when they are abreast the pitch relations they have to each other are those of the diatonic triad. As they walk along they don't all keep to the same pace; one will dart ahead a bit, another lag behind. At the same time, while they have individual variations of pace, they're conscious that they're out *together*—they will wait for each other, never quite lose sight of the condition of 'abreastness'.

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methods. I find a difficulty in doing so and I am obliged to resort to devices of counterpoint (would I knew more of them!). Still I do hear plenty of variety which pleases me in that piece and I hoped others would; it seems not; there is the mischief.' Here Hopkins seems to admit that he's ignoring the motives behind the evolution of tempered tonality; but that doesn't alter the significance of his criticism. At least to criticize tempered diatonicism from the standpoint of vocal modality is a healthy reaction to the still common and in Hopkins' day almost universal practice of criticizing vocal modality from the standpoint of instrumental tonality.

[4] *Cf.* 'L'harmonia nasce dal cantare che farno insieme le parte' (Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche*, 1558).

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Thus concord is the basis of sixteenth century harmony, discord is a momentary disturbance before the concord's repose; we can never consider any discord in isolation but only in relation to the context which it appears in, for it is not a self-contained entity but part of the progressive evolution of a number of equally important lines. The 'discordant' tone may be a suspension which 'resolves'; but it is so because melodic lines overlap and because as part of an independent melody it happened to need particular weight and stress. Or the discordant tone may be an ornamental returning note or a passing note which flows by melodically in a step progression while adding its subtle overtone to the basic harmony;[5] in this way occur shimmering effects of added sixth or second resembling the most 'modern' chord progression, while on occasion suspensions and passing notes elide so that the resultant harmony contains as many as four consecutive notes of the scale simultaneously (there's an example in Byrd's *Hodie beata Virgo*). Or a melodic changing note may be imitated in a medley of overlapping phrases, leaving the harmony tremulous and glowing; elliptical entries of these beautiful 'interrupted' passing notes are found all through the period from the famous example in the Brumel Mass quoted by Peter Warlock to many instances in the later work of Byrd and Tomkins, and they show, in common with other strict imitative passages, how deeply the harmonic oddity (and subtlety) is, in this music, rooted in the horizontal attitude.

All these effects depend on the fact that, since each individual line is free and unmetrical in rhythm and arises normally out of the natural stress of a verbal text or at least from the implications of a vocal mode of thought, and since the lines habitually overlap, any vertical cross section taken at a given moment must reveal a combination of stresses of *different intensities*. This is I think one of the most important instances (though it is not often commented on) of what Morris meant when he said that the whole secret of sixteenth century polyphony was in essence rhythmic. Syncopation is extraneous to the music of the period because there is no bar-measure to be 'off'. At the same time the importance of the *latent* metrical conception is illustrated both by the unconvincing effect of 'preparing' a suspension on the strong beat (to use what would be our terminology) and resolving it on the weak, instead of the other way round; and equally by the almost universally accepted rule that secondary or passing dissonances should appear on what we would call the 'weak' beats only. An exhaustive examination of sixteenth century technique such as that undertaken by Jeppesen does seem to indicate beyond dispute that the composers did

[5] Jeppesen points out how these secondary dissonances produced incidentally by melodic movement are always apt to be 'overlooked until the crucial moment of precipitation brings them into the light of day'. The history of the chord of the seventh is the clearest example; the added sixth may be another.

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habitually treat the (as we would say) accented and unaccented beats in a different way; that there was a collective rhythm with regularly recurring accents between which and the individual rhythm of each part there was a continual tension which was in truth the real core and essence of sixteenth century style. As Jeppesen points out, we can get an idea of how this tension manifests itself if we consider the relation between the listener to and the performer of sixteenth century polyphony. The full beauty and subtlety of the detail of each individual part can be appreciated only by the person who sings it; but he inevitably loses some of the effect made by the combination of the parts. Consideration of harmonic effectiveness may, we have seen, lead to tonal modifications in the individual line; similarly the collective rhythm continually influences the vocal rhythm of the single line.[6] What actually happens is that both collective and individual rhythms become modified. The metrical beat is rendered plastic and fluid and deprived of obviousness by the interwoven individual rhythms, and these are deprived of aggressiveness by the balance and proportion of the collective rhythm. The phenomenon known as 'subjective rhythm' whereby a series of regular taps executed at about the speed of the pulse (approximating to the crochet in the most characteristic Palestrina style) inevitably tend to group themselves in twos in the listener's mind suggests a natural precedent for this extremely subtle merging of vocal rhythm with metre, this conception of movement on two planes simultaneously. It certainly seems to me that the sixteenth century, which the nineteenth century considered rhythmically 'vague', actually developed rhythm to the highest point it has reached in European history, and perhaps it is no accident that in England this supreme musical rhythmic development coincides with the development of mature Shakesperean blank verse, with its parallel reconciliation of speech rhythm with metrical accent. Compared with it, the lyrical stanza of the eighteenth century is rhythmically jejune. Of course music developed other virtues; but the rediscovery of the real nature of the sixteenth century rhythmic conception has had an enormous effect on the most significant music of our time just as a realization of the full implications of 'Shakesperean' language has dominated our attitudes to literary history.

III.

Considered in the light of the tense relation between melodic and harmonic elements, the extraordinary range and variety that was possible to composers working within the sixteenth century

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[6]A cruder example of the influence of the collective rhythm on the individual is the development in the sixteenth century of the procedure whereby when one part stands still another moves, so preserving the latent accentual proportion. This technique is also taken over by Bach with of course a much more obvious accentual significance.

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conventions is not surprising. The elements in sixteenth century composition that seem to be 'uniform' turn out on examination to be not the result of arbitrarily imposed 'rules' but of a respect for nature; the rules, that is, are merely commonsense, practical hints, for the guidance of composers, as to the most effective way to write for voices. The rules as to melodic progression reveal this very clearly, and fundamentally they can be reduced to a few principles the essential naturalness of which can be tested by listening carefully to human speech. Larger melodic intervals imply stronger physical activity and attract more attention than smaller ones; high notes and ascending passages attract more attention than low notes and descending passages:—these two natural principles are behind almost all sixteenth century melodic construction. In ascending passages larger leaps are usually placed first and smaller ones after because the increasing leap upwards would attract excessive attention to itself and upset the proportions; descending, larger leaps followed by smaller would seem equally disproportionate since it is necessary to offset the natural decrease in attention occasioned by the descending passage. The relatively big and strained leap of the minor sixth is permissible in the ascent because then it may curl back semitonally on to the fifth, of which it may be considered an 'expressive' expansion; in the descent however the minor sixth bears a much vaguer relation to the fifth and is therefore very infrequent. The rules were a means of achieving that Proportion which Gibbons said the universe consisted of and music was measured by; between what Jeppesen calls the two main types of melodic development—the forceful, accentual and dramatic which builds up gradually and falls suddenly away, and the meditative and reposeful which starts with a sharp rise and then slowly declines (*cf.* plainsong)—pure sixteenth century technique holds a middle way. If anything, it has a downward tendency; but, as Jeppesen says, 'proportion and repose are the first requisite of Palestrina's music, and there is perhaps no other style in which passionate momentum seems to be so restricted . . . It has no violent accent implying an inordinate activity of the attention. A superlative repose and simplicity are the fundamental criteria of Palestrina's melody . . . it is characterised by its directness of aim, which always seeks the shortest way and employs the simplest and least conspicuous means, ever exhibiting an unfailingly sensitive obedience to the claims of nature. Out of these spring a wonderful tenderness and serene benignity—unmistakable tokens of supreme culture . . . In an elementary psychologic mode of expression it might be called an equalized absorption of the attention, translated into musical terms—a calm alternation as devoutly accepted as the alternation of the hours of the day—a culture which completes the orbit of its course by becoming nature again: Cortesia.' Moreover even so apparently artificial a procedure as the insistent 'fugal' repetition of phrases of the text had its practical advantages; only thus would the words be audible through the maze of polyphony. The acceptance of a scale of values (based on acoustics) was really

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the key to freedom, because when the 'rules' were broken, the effect was proportionate. For instance, what the rule as to compass said in effect was : 'don't exceed the convenient range of a octave unless there's some point in doing so—unless you want to build a particularly passionate climax to your line or to illustrate some expressive aspect of the text.' Thus the leaps upwards in Byrd's *Exsurge Domine* grow progressively larger until a terrific climax is reached with the 'forbidden' leap of the minor ninth. By breaking down the criterion of reference we destroy the emotional impact of intervals and make such effects almost impossible.

Harmonic regulations too had their basis in nature ; suspended discords had to be 'prepared' because without familiarity with instrumental technique, voices couldn't sing two tones standing in discordant relation to one another except in so far as the discord was produced by the movement of easy melodic progressious starting from consonance. The contemporary theorist Vicentino points out how all the rules governing the treatment of suspended dissonances are devised to secure satisfactory harmony, and very typically remarks that since Nature abhors extremes it is better to follow a primary (suspended) dissonance by an imperfect consonance than by a perfect one. Ornamental dissonances are better used in the descending than in the ascending form, because if they occur at the top of a melodic contour they may cause a tasteless distraction of the attention from the main proportions ; if the interplay of secondary dissonances should prove troublesome from the vertical point of view, the most natural and free development of the melodies should be the final arbiter. In general, contrary motion of the parts is favourable to harmonic cogency, and consecutive octaves and fifths, because of their unisonal quality, are detrimental to it.

The variety possible within this natural framework centres mainly in the infinite potentialities of sixteenth century dissonance, whether conceived melodically and 'accidentally' (secondary or pass ing dissonances on the weak beat), or as an intentionally stressed contrast to consonance (primary or suspended dissonances on the strong beat); and the multiple combinations of different harmonic stresses which are within the composer's range all depend ultimately on the dual nature of sixteenth century rhythm. In Palestrina's suave ethereal idiom the melodic and harmonic stresses tend to a greater degree of coincidence than they do in the more rugged and human style of Byrd, in which the greater preponderance of 'expressive' harmonies cannot be separated from the more vigorous and inflectional quality of his line. (These characteristics pervade even the Agnus Dei of the Five Part Mass with its poignantly lovely augmented fifth and dissolving cadences ; even though, of course, Byrd's personal characteristics are clearest in his settings of the English language, from which, indeed, they are inseparable). Similarly the passionate nature of Weelkes' line entails more dark chromatic harmonies than are found in the austere fugal idiom of Gibbons, and Vittoria's relatively short-phrased line has a mystical ardour which is not found in the long gleaming brilliance of Lasso

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or the intense purity of Josquin des Prés, with their fluid interlapping of rhythmic and harmonic clauses. Even the preference of a minor composer such as Ward for the anguished dissonances of double and even triple suspensions cannot be separated from the inveterate boldness of his rhythmic ellipses. At the back of all this variety of manner expressed in the relation between rhythm and harmony there is probably the connection with the spoken language. Italians like Palestrina and Marenzio write lines that are liquid and glowing, those of the English Byrd and Tallis are of more sinewy outline, those of the French Mauduit or Costeley more quietly conversational. Moreover, although the medium is restricted to voices in concert the range of tone-colour which can be obtained from varied groupings of the different voices yields little in extent and nothing in subtlety to the modern orchestra. Whoever thinks that vocal polyphony entails any limitation in range of tone-colour should listen first to the records of Palestrina's Missa Assumpta est Maria, with its extraordinary radiant luminosity of tone centred in the treble and alto parts' mellifluous consonance, and then to the record of Vittoria's Tenebrae, with its dark sepulchral sonority. Between these two extremes, the possible tone-gradings are almost infinite.

The nineteenth century notion that 'all sixteenth century music sounds alike' was based partly, of course, on ignorance of the music itself, partly on a misunderstanding of the nature and value of artistic traditions. It was a consequence of the same kind of stupidity as produced the notorious *mesalliances* 'Bach and Handel', 'Haydn and Mozart', except that unfamiliarity with the music rendered difficult any such neat pairing-off, so that the whole mass of sixteenth century composers were left to bear to each other a relation of vague, uneasy promiscuity. One can't say much about it one way or the other (the account ran) because 'all sixteenth century music is Impersonal'. If this means that Palestrina's music was conceived as religious ritual it's true, of course, and not a liability : but it's not nearly so true of Byrd or Vittoria, and not true at all of the secular music unless we merely mean that in Weelkes and Marenzio (say) intense human feeling finds complete realization in terms of music, rather than working by mental association, as does so much of the music of the nineteenth century (in this sense, of course, *any* great music is impersonal). The long-standing hold of this 'impersonal' theory about sixteenth century music is certainly curious when one remembers the avowedly expressive intentions of many of the composers. A whole series of inherently musical melodic and harmonic conventions grew up in association with the 'expressive' passages of the texts ; chromaticisms represent love, death and pain, melismatic passages flower out of references to physical movement. This kind of expressive symbolism in terms of music is another characteristic which Bach has in common with the sixteenth century. When nineteenth century musicologists said Bach and Palestrina and Byrd and Lasso were 'impersonal' they meant that they weren't like Middle period Beethoven, Wagner or Puccini. This expressive symbolism

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implied, both in Bach's case and in that of sixteenth century composers, the closest possible contact between composers and poets. 'The Poet cometh to you with words, either accompanied with or prepared for the well inchaunting skill of Musicke', said Sir Philip Sidney ; and the relation was reciprocal. It must be so, I suppose, in any healthy society, for the relation between music and poetry is merely one manifestation of the more fundamental relation between music and speech, between music and life.

IV.

So far we have said nothing about 'form' in sixteenth century music. The reason we have left this aspect till last in our discussion of the technique is that in our sense form didn't then exist. Of course this doesn't mean that the music is therefore vague or rhapsodic, but simply that melody is composition and composition the dovetailing of melodies. Climax is made by the unfolding of the phrase and the placing of high notes in all the parts (again it's a matter of the subtle combination of stresses of differing intensity), and by the ellipsis or expansion of the rhythms. Since the rhythms overlap the climaxes of the individual lines do not coincide ; and the total effect of climax in the composition is an extremely subtle mean taken between the contributory climaxes. Both pitch and movement will be largely controlled by the words ; Dr. Fellowes has shown how, for instance, in Byrd's lovely Ave Verum the peaks of the melodic curves are always reached on the most important syllables. The words will also directly control the lay-out of the whole composition—the relative proportion of polyphonic to chordal sections ; and you cannot possibly conceive of the structure of a Palestrina motet as something existing apart from the music, as you can conceive of a dance existing apart from the dance's music. The minuet is a structure the principles of which are dictated by human feet, principles to which Bach and Mozart and Haydn conform with varying degrees of precision. But a Palestrinian motet is melody unfolding from words, or at least from a vocal mode of thought, and all the organization that is necessary is included in the phenomenon of the unfolding—in the counterpoint. Here we can see the significance of the distinction between polyphony and counterpoint, terms often used loosely as though they were interchangeable. Counterpoint was the sixteenth century's means of giving order to polyphonic experience. It was, as we saw in the earlier article, a different method from that of the thirteenth century, a method which we can observe gradually evolving through the increasing use of canon and other fugal devices in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The riot of scholastic counterpoint indulged in by the first Netherlands school was perhaps a kind of growing pain which music had to suffer in achieving its new criterion of order, based on homogeneity of material. After Ockeghem and Obrecht had revealed how the contrapuntal technique could be used for expressive purposes—was, indeed, the only possible

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technique for their particular ends— the proportion of merely mechanical counterpoint in sixteenth century music that has survived is really astonishingly small.

While the technique of almost all sixteenth century vocal music is broadly fugal it was not and of course could not be anything like the harmonically centred diatonic fugue of the eighteenth century. Fugue in the sixteenth century sense implies imitative entries starting at the intervals of the absolute and perfect consonances, but its growth is conditioned not by shifting key centres (which as we have seen didn't exist) but modally and lyrically under the influence of the words. Usually a Palestrina motet is built up of several fugues (usually with overlapping cadences), each developing a phrase of the text. There is of course an organic continuity between them (perhaps this is where the composer's genius counts for most) but there is no necessity for any restatement of line or motive, and indeed such passages, almost always connected with repetition in the words of the text, are rather the exception than the rule. (The perfect structural balance of the Agnus of Byrd's Five Part Mass is worth close examination from this point of view). Masses, motets and madrigals are built on the same general principles, except that some of the lighter secular pieces and all the ballets are naturally more 'formal' and dance-like. (On the other hand some of Morley's gayest madrigals are also his most contrapuntal). In general the method is continually evolutionary and self-generative, and therefore makes considerable call on the composer's staying power.[7] It's not surprising that some admirable conventions degenerated into clichés (close imitations of phrases beginning with a rising fourth and then falling down the scale for instance) which became the stock property of composers as a means of tiding over an awkward passage when inspiration flagged; (Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction* tells us that it was customary for composers in their student days to learn off by rote a number of set endings—extended final cadences to Amen, etc.) The wonder is that in the works of the great figures at least, such clichés are so few and far between; and in an idiom founded on the natural potentialities of the voice even the apparent cliché may be reborn by the modification of one note or rhythm.

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[7]What Morley says in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction* about the instrumental fancy is really true too of the vocal music which is less free only in so far as it is conditioned by a verbal text (or 'ditty'); and the instrumental fancies, like some of the masses, have a generalised, if unspecific relation to language. Morley's passage runs as follows: 'The most principall and chiefest kinde of musicke which is made without a dittye is the fantasie, that is, when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list. In this may more art be showne than in any other musicke, because the composer is tide to nothing but that he may adde, deminish and alter at his pleasure'.

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Tovey paid a really tremendous compliment to the sixteenth century when he pointed out that in this period the 'purists' were the men of far-sighted musical intellect, and in general it was the inaccurate artists that were dull. In no other period has the criterion of 'correctness' been so closely equated with the opinion and practice of genius, and of course this could be so only because, as we have seen, music really was a social and religious manifestation. It is this unity of conception, the ripening of an expressive humanism that we recognize and respond to, on the foundation of the mediaeval outlook, that makes me feel, in listening to Byrd's Five part Mass or Great Service, to Tallis's Lamentations, to a Palestrina Mass or a tiny motet like O Bone Jesu, to the tragic El Greco-like intensity of Vittoria's Missa pro Defunctis, to the splendour of Lasso or Arcadelt or the pathos of Josquin's little Ave Verum, that music has never again reached this point, except in the cantatas and some other works of Bach. No doubt there are other works which are equally great—pieces of Mozart, Couperin and Haydn, Monteverdi, Beethoven and Berlioz; but to varying degrees they all had a sophistication of consciousness which makes the earlier unity—the perfect purity of feeling and of workmanship—either difficult to achieve or else irrelevant (Beethoven's unity is so essentially personal). The second half of the sixteenth century seems to me the most *fundamentally* musical period in European civilization; at no other time do we find such subtlety and maturity of technique functioning as naturally as the human organism. The general level of 'taste', among artists and 'folk', has never been so universally creative. Some of the music referred to above has a poignancy almost too great for the human heart to bear; but the human heart, the music tells us, rests secure in the love of God. Such an attitude, it seems to me, was encouraged rather than contradicted by the numerous tensions of the time consequent on the gradual breakdown of the mediaeval world. While one musn't over-estimate the effect of social and political catastrophe on the conditions in which most musicains lived and worked, we may say that Palestrina and Lasso and Byrd revealed a peace that was the more welcome as it passed beyond, not only understanding, but also pestilence and war, the sack of Rome or the massacre of St. Bartholemew. And if today we cannot listen to the music with precisely the exaltation and radiance with which we presume contemporary audiences heard it, we cannot but listen to it with an intensity no less sharp for being different, and with a reverence born of nostalgia.

W. H. MELLERS.

[*To be concluded*]

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MORE APOLOGIES FOR LATENESS.

Again we can only apologize for the lateness in the appearance of *Scrutiny*. Neither Editors nor contributors have been at fault. War-time difficulties on the side of material production have been the cause. However, it is perhaps permissible at this date to say that it looks as if the time when we shall be able to begin making up on the lag might not be very far away. On the editorial side we shall be mobilized in readiness.

THE ULTIMATE VISION

AN ANTHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS VERSE, by Norman Nicholson (Pelican Books, 9d.).

POEMS, 1937-1942, by David Gascoyne (Nicholson & Watson, 8/6).

THE NINE BRIGHT SHINERS by Anne Ridler (Faber & Faber, 6/-).

> Not for me the ultimate vision.—*A Song for Simeon.*
>
> I am in the hands of an unknown God.—D. H. Lawrence.

Mr. Nicholson's anthology, first published in 1942, suggested the presence and nature of a religious revival in poetry. The connection between the spirit of that anthology and the recent work of some of our contemporary poets who are being most favourably received by the literary press, is a matter of importance to those interested either in poetry or religion in this country. It has now been generally realised that the writing of poetry of any value involves something more than the application of an unspecialised vocabulary to interests and problems of a political or psycho-analytical nature. At the same time, organised religious belief, increasingly deprived of its authority in generally accredited revelation, provides an adequate basis for the 'criticism of life' for the faithful few only, and faith of this kind is more difficult to achieve than ever. The faddism, the intense examination and exaggerated justification of self, the private symbolism and the public intimacies of so much verse written over the last ten years may to a large extent be attributed to that difficulty. With the problem itself, no critic can fail to sympathise, since it is equally a condition of criticism as of creative work of any kind. Inadequate solutions of the problem are very much the critic's concern, since they show themselves in inadequate workmanship.

The grafting of a vaguely Christian belief on to the type of sensibility which produced the generally faulty work referred to

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above is no solution at all. The sort of poetry which Mr. Nicholson includes in quantity in his anthology 'for the times', illustrates the truth of that. Mr. Gascoyne uses the work 'metapsychological' for some of his verse. The metapsychological stage for the poet is, as I see it, an attempt on the part of the poet to achieve some sort of compromise between a desire for ultimate belief, which might lead him to the ultimate vision, and the many confused modern influences which have moulded his sensibility. For the poets in Mr. Nicholson's anthology, it is a return to what he calls 'a Christian point of view.' This point of view may be seen in poems by 'Roman Catholic, Anglican, Non-Conformist, or even pagan, Buddhist or sceptic looking at the same thing from his own point of view.' It is not surprising that a catholicity so vast should be without the limits which give strength and intensity to the experience which they enclose and should produce on the whole, poetry *about* religion, a revival of interest, not in the ultimate vision, but in the spirit of Sankey and Moody or Francis Thompson.

'To many modern poets' says Mr. Nicholson, 'the events of Our Lord's Life are so vivid that they seem to be contemporary.' This involves, as we realise in his own poems, a contemporary boisterousness of approach which is usually quite insensitive to the values of words. His 'Carol for the Holy Innocents' kicks off (to use an expression which is not out of place), with the line :

> The cat was let out of the bag by an angel.

Mr. S. L. Bethell too is anxious to show that a tripping jauntiness of spirit is as good as any in which to approach his subject, and so we begin 'Thoughts in a Garden, 1939' with :

> Missing Bomber—All Night Search
> Another critic's joined the Church.

Mr. Walter Roberts' poem 'The Builder', has a verse, unfortunately serious in intention, which sums up the spirit :

> Toiling with his trowel and hod
> He climbs with easy steps to God,
> Standing in his belt and braces
> He attains all heavenly graces.

For the rest, some Hopkins and some Eliot, not very well chosen, a great deal of indifferent declamatory verse by Charles Williams and Rayner Heppenstall, some Yeats and Lawrence, rather ill at ease here, Chesterton, W. H. Davies and Hilaire Belloc 'whom we have ceased to imitate but not to respect' (Mr. Nicholson), Auden in a dull mood, David Gascoyne and Anne Ridler, and a few other poems of more or less uniform inoffensiveness and mediocrity.

The volumes by Mr. Gascoyne and Mrs. Ridler draw attention to very different aspects of the revival. Mrs. Ridler has none of the undisciplined fervour which tends to upset Mr. Gascoyne's judge-

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ment. She could never write a passage like the following, from Mr. Gascoyne's 'Camera Obscura':

> . . . when high-
> Charged and bruise-coloured clouds, like tight
> Emotion-swollen bosoms rising, brew
> Intoxicating storm-broth for the night :

The Nine Bright Shiners, we are told in a foot note, are the nine months preceding childbirth. Her verse has qualities of simplicity of intention and execution, and sometimes a clarity and exactness of expression, which enable her frequently to succeed within her limited sphere. There is in her verse a quietism and gentleness, not to say gentility, which makes the title she has chosen for this work very appropriate. But in that very sympathetic and well-mannered simplicity of approach lies a weakness, and her 'homely' philosophy and 'simple courage', while saving her from the more spectacular kind of failure, permit her to come too near to the bathos of the Woman's Page and the sentimentality of the less successful works of Virginia Woolf. Thus, in 'For Robin and Kirstie':

> For I remember the delight I had—
> And may have—in your company ;
> In many mundane and cheerful things,
> But in music chiefly,
> That is both human and heavenly.

and in 'Aisholt Revisited':

> But I pray that the simplicity
> And goodness of those days are not lost or corrupted ;
> As we in this country still remember Wordsworth . . . '

and in 'For A Child Expected':

> Our child was to be the living sign of our joy,
> Restore to each the other's lost infancy.

These attitudes, wholesome in themselves, and tinged in Mrs. Ridler's verse with a nostalgia for simple satisfactions and relationships, can, at the best, produce only minor poetry. There is a place for this kind of unpretentious work. But Mrs. Ridler has, not intentionally of course, evaded the more complex and profound spiritual issues with which we are presented, and her work is correspondingly lacking in vigour and intensity. She has no doubt been influenced by Marvell and the Caroline poets ; but a more robust talent than Mrs. Ridler's is needed to bridge the gap between the informed, assured urbanity of that period, and the vague kindly intention of our own suburban days. Her verse bears a relationship to Marvell similar to that which Mr. Gascoyne's bears to Donne. Some of the inessentials are there, and the inessentials alone.

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An immense coarsening of the educated sensibility lies between. It is that coarsening which permits Mrs. Ridler to publish a poem like the last one in this book, 'Jane at Ten Months' which it is a mild embarrassment to read, and which makes it impossible for an educated critic to find any important connection between her and Andrew Marvell.

Mr. Gascoyne has had a wilder poetic career than Mrs. Ridler. It is not surprising that his contribution to the revival should be larger in scope and pretension than hers. His faults are attended with a richness of dramatic gesture which makes them bolder and more conspicuous. This volume is divided into five parts, Religious, Metaphysical (or Metapsychological), A Longer Poem, Poems on Themes of a Personal Nature, and Poems of Time and Place, but the grouping is arbitrary and of little importance. The religious poems portray the suffering of Christ and the Saints, and the constant participation of every man in their suffering and sacrifice. Thus, in 'Ecce Homo', the Crucifixion is seen as permanently re-enacted, re-enacted, for example, today :

> See, the centurions wear riding boots,
> Black shirts, and badges and peaked caps,
> Greet one another with raised-arm salutes . . .

This trick is worn out, and its tiresome obviousness is already familiar to the reader of the Pelican anthology. There is a similar cheapness of effect in the 'Christian warriors, defending Faith and Property,' who are measured against a 'Christ of Revolution and of Poetry' who is to redeem our sterile misery :

> That Man's long journey through the night
> May not have been in vain.

As one comes across lines like these, and poetic diction in the grand manner—'the sky, that aether lake, vast azure canopy . . . '—one realizes that it is not to the seventeenth century, but to the late Victorian and Georgian poets that one must look for a comparable type of verse. There is a homogeneousness of feeling and attitude between the modern revival and Matthew Arnold and Rupert Brooke which is more important than their differences. Mr. Gascoyne's poem on Oxford, in fact, with its last line :

> Slim spires, hope-coloured fields ; these belong to no date.

would slip unnoticed into a Georgian collection in its entirety. Arnold is present in a somewhat over-excited condition in :

> Our weak hearts, dulled by the intolerably loud
> Commotion of this tragic century.

and

> . . . where men see
> The tragic splendour of their final destiny.

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Yet Mr. Gascoyne, when he controls his exuberance, can write effectively and with some strength :

> Because the depths
> Are clear with only death's
> Marsh-light, because the rock of grief
> Is clearly too extreme for us to breach ;
> Deepen our depths,
> And aid our unbelief.

and has a certain gift for suggesting a fullness of sensation which is, unhappily, scarcely able to make itself felt over a welter of colourless abstraction. At those points where we expect to find the fundamental issues of his poetry realised in concrete terms, made hard and clear and given shape, we are left with a sentimental truism, an abstraction, a catchphrase. So, in the lines from 'A Wartime Dawn':

> Until a breeze
> From some pure Nowhere straying . . .

and from 'Odeur de Pensée':

> . . . Nostalgic breezes ; and it's then we sense
> Remote presentiment of some intensely bright
> Impending spiritual dawn, of which the pure
> Immense illumination seems about to pour
> In upon our existence from beyond
> The edge of Knowing !

Pure Nowheres are too much Mr. Gascoyne's province. As an alternative we have the triteness of 'And one more day of war starts everywhere' or 'Perhaps the only poem that I can never write is *true*.' Such is his contribution to the revival. It is not a renewing of life, but a resurrection of something already dead, an attempt to return to old ways of feeling without the original stimulus. It is this which makes so much of Mr. Gascoyne's religious fervour seem deliberately self-induced—he attaches emotion to Christian symbols without amplifying or intensifying their meaning, like many of the other poets of Mr. Nicholson's anthology. The poem 'Misterioso' in the French 'Strophes Elégiaques à la Mémoire d'Alban Berg' ends

> . . . l'homme tragique divisé en lui-même
> Qui maintenant doit monter sur l'échafaud de son trone
> Et porter une couronne de feu, et être trahi, tomber
> Dans les ténèbres du mythe pour retrouver son Christ.

The danger for Mr. Gascoyne and for others in the anthology is that they become so obsessed with their own plight and suffering that they begin to be satisfied merely to contemplate and enlarge upon it. The ultimate vision is forgotten, or what is worse, sentimentalised. It is depressing to note how, as we increasingly

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isolate and consider what factors give life, coherence and importance not only to poetry but to the whole social organism, we are increasingly unable either to find them, or to supply them, in our own.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

HOW SHALL WE TEACH?

EDUCATION THROUGH ART, by Herbert Read (Faber and Faber, 25/-).

I must claim a good deal of indulgence from Mr. Read himself and from *Scrutiny* readers in reviewing this book. I write with an interest in all its subject matter, art, education and wider issues involved, but most of it is a general interest; I lack the experience of art education which Mr. Read possesses, even though as an investigator only, and also his psychological equipment. Ideally I feel that the book should have a second notice with this specialized bias.

The book has three main themes, the nature of education, the nature of art and, emerging at various points, the nature of civilization. It has clearly, as Mr. Read says in the final chapter, been written under the stress of war. He sees our salvation in a 'democratic education', the only necessary revolution':

> 'The argument of this book is that the purpose of education, as of art, should be to preserve the organic wholeness of man and of his mental faculties, so that as he passes from childhood to manhood, from savagery to civilization, he nevertheless retains the unity of consciousness which is the only source of social harmony and individual happiness . . .
>
> What is now suggested, in opposition to the whole of the logico-rationalistic tradition, is that there exists a concrete visual mode of "thinking", a mental process which reaches its highest efficiency in the creation of the work of art . . .
>
> To the formal cognition of the world present in logical thought it opposes the organic being of the world as a concrete reality. In the wider sociological aspect, it maintains that a way of life based on the knowledge of organic relationships (to use Plato's phrase) is a safer guide to conduct and a surer basis for social organization than those systems or ideologies which are the product of the logical mode of thinking, and which produce such perversions of natural development as those represented by the current doctrines of historical materialism, racialism, totalitarianism—all of which, in one way or another, deny the fundamental truth that the law of growth is inherent in the universe and manifest in the natural man' (pp. 69-70).

But is logic such a diabolic influence? Isn't it part of the natural man by a catholic (I use a small 'c' deliberately) definition? And by what elasticity of language can the -isms mentioned be called logical? The first certainly in the main, but racialism and totalitarianism, in so far as the latter means anything by itself, would

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seem to be more the products of a crude or perverted 'integration' in Mr. Read's sense, which a little logical cognition and analysis does much to disentangle. Mr. Read is, as we know, an extreme democrat and repudiates all forms of imposed authority. He believes intensely in the essential goodness of human nature—by traditional standards, though he finds other means of expressing these—but he repudiates the individualism of the older libertarians in favour of Trigant Burrow's belief that human beings can only find full development in the group consciousness; we naturally tend towards a state of harmony and brotherly love in which the 'positive' (good) qualities 'inevitably eliminate' their 'opposites' (bad qualities). Within this conception of human nature Mr. Read formulates his latest theories of art and of education by aesthetic methods. In these his social theories become to some extent clearer and the dangers of his anti-intellectualism more obvious.

'The principle of origination', the calling up of images from the depths of the subconscious is enlarged on far beyond the suggestions in *Art Now*. The psychologies of Jaensch and Jung dominate his thought. He is not quite convinced that all artists are eidetics and he realizes the difficulties in discriminating between the eidetic and the memory image, but

> 'People who retain the eidetic disposition past childhood will tend to be 'integrate' rather than 'disintegrate', and this class will include all the mentally creative types, whether artists or scientists . . . But the integrate type has got an inner relation to art, so that the difference between artistic and inartistic also falls under a fundamental—and far wider—grouping into integrate and disintegrate types. *Art, too, is an attempt to revert from the disintegration induced by civilization to organic modes of Being*' (p. 82).

All this would seem to give an undue priority to the visual artist, though Mr. Read is at pains to stress the democratic equality of all types of artist and, as a parallel, all types of child temperament in education. In shifting from the subject of perception to that of temperament he becomes far less interesting reading and his short classification of artists, past and present seems to me singularly unprofitable and strangely out of keeping with the themes of the book, for example:

> 'As already suggested, these four groups may be exactly equated with Jung's four function-types, as follows:
>
> realism—thinking
> super-realism—feeling
> expressionism—sensation
> constructivism—intuition'[1] (p. 97).

[1]There are some even more surprising examples on p. 9 which form the basis of the main argument on education and which I shall refer to later.

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The final discussion of value follows on a long examination of the art of children, elaborately illustrated and documented. He does still believe in values in art and thinks that the highest are the product of the intuitive-type of character. He again follows Jung in calling the most significant images bodied forth by the 'originating principle' in the artist 'archetypes', or rather manifestations of archetypes for 'archetypes do not consist of inherited ideas or images, but of inherited predispositions to reaction'.

> 'The number of images or archetypes is relatively limited, but among those most frequently revealed by analysis is the mandala theme. "Mandala" is a Sanskrit word, meaning a circle or magic ring, and its symbolism embraces all concentrically arranged figures, all circular or square circumferences having a centre, and all radial or spherical arrangements. It often takes the form of a flower, a cross, or a wheel, with a distinct tendency to assume four-fold structure. As a symbol, the mandala occurs not only throughout the East, but also in Europe during the Middle Ages . . . Of course, it might be argued that the very fact that Christian iconography includes *four* evangelists, and that the Cross as a symbol divides any design of which it is an essential part into four compartments, *imposes* a madala-like treatment on the artist. That is obvious; but we must go a little deeper than this, and ask *why* four evangelists, *why* a four-limbed cross . . . Once we begin to ask such questions, it begins to look as though, before Christian iconography imposed a four-fold treatment of his design on the artist, some anterior force had imposed a four-fold tendency on the evolution of Christian iconography' (p. 183).

Mr. Read elaborates with references to his own observations of child art and to physiology and bio-chemistry and concludes:

> 'What I am seriously suggesting, therefore, is that *there exists within the mind of the child, no less than of the adult, a psychic process or activity, taking place below the level of consciousness, which tends to organize the sketchy or rudimentary images present in the unconscious into a harmonious pattern . . . psychic equilibrium, which is the basis of all forms of equableness and intellectual integration, is only possible when this integration of the unconscious is allowed or encouraged to take place, which it notably does in all forms of imaginative activity* . . . Experience only falls into shape and becomes memorable and utilizable in the degree that it falls into *artistic* shape. Consciousness is only socially integrated in the degree that it is an aesthetic apprehension of reality . . . We only achieve mutual relatedness and collective unity in so far as the contents of the individual unconscious are allowed to arrange themselves according to the pattern of the universal architypes, the primordial images which are also aesthetic in form and quality. Such is the element of *value* we find implicit in the world of facts and it is possibly the only value *that cannot be excluded* from the progressive evolution of life' (pp. 192-4).

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How far does archetypal inspiration really infuse value? In fact, how can archetypal inspiration be detected? One remembers some rather surprising manifestations in Miss Bodkin's book—to say nothing of Mr. Wilson Knights's. Unfortunately Mr. Read does not illustrate in detail except for the mandala. One has a suspicion that these remote archetypes may be barely distinguishable in the visual arts from the principle of form itself; integration can in that case go no further. It is easier to accept Mr. Read when he is emphasizing the variety of art. But his Wordsworthian reverence for child art is hard to accept.

> 'That the adult may impart more knowledge and experience in his painting goes without saying; but this is not an aesthetic difference' (p. 208).

The possibility of an increasing value in richer and more comprehensive harmonies would seem, therefore, to be ruled out, yet 'the teacher must be prepared to say a reluctant farewell to the charms of naïvety'. Mr. Read refuses to commit himself on the question of more immediate aesthetic standards. The most satisfying examples of children's pictures in the book are certainly those which he labels intuitive and I also feel, to generalize rather hastily, that their interest derives from the fact that the authors have achieved a momentary maturity of vision without any appearance of strain. I do not think that it is necessary to push the search for the source of ultimate value back so far as Mr. Read does here. It seems to me to lie in the image of general human appeal. The complex interrelation between this and the actual concrete realization must be decided afresh in every case.

Such is the broad conception of art through which education is to take place. Mr. Read quotes Jaensch:

> *'the closest parallel to the structure of personality of the child is not the mental structure of the logician, but that of the artist'* (p. 58).

With the idea of harmonious development in education no one is going to quarrel. Everything depends on what it means in practice. One does not quarrel with the aesthetic method in so far as it tends to produce an integrated personality in addition to imparting knowledge. But knowledge is not merely something 'necessary to the business of bread-winning'. It and the ability to reason logically are essential to the civilized human being so that he may be civilized. To one who has found, during the last three years, that those who possess what should be thought merely average intellectual attainments are thought to be brilliant, Mr. Read's cavalier treatment of it is a little shocking:

> 'if . . . the purpose of education is integration—the preparation of the individual child for his place in society not only vocationally but spiritually and mentally, then it is not information he needs so much as wisdom, poise, self-realization, zest . . .' (p. 227).

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There is plenty of poise and zest among the ignorant. However, we know only too well that a great deal goes wrong at the primary stage with which Mr. Read is in the first place concerned when he outlines an organic system in which play tends all the time towards art. Thought seems to me to have a lowly place in it; it is related to craft which includes 'measurement (elementary arithmetic and geometry), gardening, biology, farming, needlework, and some elementary physics and chemistry, structure of materials, composition of foodstuffs, fertilizers, etc.', but not to any literary activities all of which relate to feeling. The stress on creativity and especially creativity of a Romantic kind persists into the later stages of education. Mr. Read writes admirably on the lack of any central principle in the Spens report—and the same now applies to Mr. Butler's Bill—which proposed

> 'the creation of an independent system of "technical" education. The result will be to create one more unbalanced social type. For there is no reason to suppose that a technically educated individual will confine his mental processes to questions connected with the engineering and building industries. Indeed, we can already see, especially in America, the emergence of a specifically technical intelligence which claims to think in its own way on all aspects of existence. Essentially materialistic, it extends its almost wholly unconscious philosophy into the spheres of economics and history, and sees no reason why its Weltanschaung should not be made the basis of politics. There are exceptions, but fundamentally the technocrat denies that values (aesthetic, ethical and religious) are a constituent of the objective world' (p. 238).

Mr. H. G. Wells is still a leader of thought for a vast section of the public. The scheme for a Secondary School follows the play-project-work sequence already begun. The curriculum is bizarre:

> 'drama, design, music, craft . . . Under the master of design would come a preceptor in drawing; under the craft master, preceptors in mathematics and science; under the music master, preceptors in eurhythmics and dancing; and under the master of drama, preceptors in history, literature and elocution' (pp. 241-2).

One could laugh but I prefer merely to point out that the adolescent's introduction to the accumulated wisdom of the ages is to be subsidiary to amateur theatricals and occupies less space than eurythmics, dancing and drawing; for, by possessing separate status as well as the part they must play in other branches, the training of intuition and sensation, music and design, appear to occupy a vast share of the programme. Languages are omitted except for the introductory stages as an extra. I've always thought it was nonsense to teach anything as a mere mental discipline, but why the other benefits of learning a language should be beyond the mental capacity of the adolescent I can't imagine. I do not see that such emphasis on creative efforts

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is going to conduce to a rejection of the bogus in the adult world, rather the reverse, for how much of the 'ready-made' is produced in all sincerity! On the other hand a certain amount of literary discrimination can be developed—one would like to know whether it can be done in the visual arts any more successfully than by Miss Bulley—and a little thinking in history and civics. The contemporary environment is all the time the main hindrance. I don't think that the close relationship between 'productive logical thinking in the exact sciences' and creative art has really any bearing on plans for the education of ordinary mortals. Looking at our problem in the broadest way, what we need to do is to teach more and more people as much as possible, having regard for diversities of aptitude, but keeping a central principle in our history and literature. I can't see that our ancestors of the more fortunate classes were any the worse for having their minds well-filled. This is pretty crude but I think worth saying. The great difficulty at present at the primary stage is a straightforward administrative one, overcrowding.

Mr. Read believes in Platonic ideas of harmony and rhythm as his centralizing principles. This places him with those who are more interested in the method of teaching than in what is taught. An interest in method is far more serious than the exclusive interest in organization so prevalent at the moment, especially in official quarters. But the art of teaching is the opposite of the art of cooking, the substance is all-important. If we propose to train the mental functions harmoniously I still think that we should draw up a curriculum of necessary subjects and then apply the method, rather than pick subjects to fit a method of character-building, which, though, in theory based on a balanced analysis of human nature, would lead to results as unbalanced as the driest pedantry.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE ELIZABETHAN CLIMATE

SHAKESPEARE AND THE NATURE OF MAN, by Theodore Spencer (C.U.P., 18/-).

One result of the post-Romantic stress on the more-than-individual factors involved in artistic creation may be seen in the renewed interest of literary historians in the 'intellectual background' the pervasive 'climate of opinion', that helps to shape the works of a given period. And the growing realization of the significance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has directed that interest especially towards this crucial phase of out civilization. Dr. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*,[1] for example was an attempt to bring out the 'basic assumptions', the 'essential commonplaces', of the Elizabethan age—assumptions that look so queer when compared with the characteristically modern trends of thought

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whose emergence was traced by Mr. Willey in *The Seventeenth-Century Background*. Now Mr. Theodore Spencer, the author of *Death and Elizabethan Tragedy*, gives us a study of Shakespeare in the light of the contemporary views on the nature of man and his place in the universe—the 'framework that gave him his terms and values.'

This new book, then, is an opportunity for raising a question of some general importance. For it seems to me that work of the kind represented both by Mr. Spencer and by Dr. Tillyard, useful as it may be, is likely to foster an approach to great literature that is both partial and pedantic, blunting, therefore, that full sensitive awareness on which the right understanding not only of 'literature' but of 'life' depends. We notice, to start with, that this line of research has tended to limit itself to those elements of psychological and moral background that can be more or less explicitly formulated in intellectual terms ; in consequence there is considerable abstraction from the complex living pattern—none the less real for being composed of intangibles—that is the object of understanding. So far, we may say, the explorers have not allowed sufficiently either for the extent or for the richness of the ground to be explored.

One reason for this may perhaps be due to the fact that there is no word or phrase that adequately describes what we want to get at—the object of discovery. 'Intellectual background' is too narrow, representing only a part of the whole, and emphasizing too much what can be readily formulated. As for 'climate of opinion', even if some more comprehensive word could be substituted for 'opinion', 'climate' would still need to be supplemented by some such metaphor as 'soil'—from which things grow. The truth is that the tone and temper of an age is made up not only of shared thoughts and intellectual and moral assumptions, of 'beliefs', but of sentiments, modes of perception and attitudes pervasive in the general life—of something roughly corresponding to sensibility in the individual. In any period there is a tendency not only to accept without much question certain assumptions and to think along certain lines, but also to be sensitive and responsive to certain elements of experience rather than to others, and to be responsive in particular ways. So too, in its response to the basic and inescapable facts of human experience—such as death—an age has a recognizable timbre of its own. These habitual and implicit modes of consciousness are sometimes made explicit as intellectual concepts and 'ideas', and as such they may be built into systems of thought that will in turn contribute to the wider stream : just as the sense of neighbourliness in mediaeval life was built into social theory which in turn fostered a sense of the individual's obligations to the community. But as *ideas* they tend to lose relation with the living pattern of perceptions and attitudes in which alone they have their full meaning.

[1]Which itself is similar in intention to Professor Hardin Craig's encyclopaedic but awkwardly written, *The Enchanted Glass : The Elizabethan Mind in Literature* (1935).

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It is on these shared modes of being[2] that the culture of an age is built. So pervasive as to be taken for granted at the time by all but the exceptionally conscious, when the 'climate' has changed they are accessible in their *active* state only in works of art. For just as it is the artist's function to bring into consciousness what is taken for granted and to test its implications, so we in turn—in a kind of spiritual ecology—may use the work of art to explore the conditions of cultural health or decay. But only if we are literary critics—sensitive, that is, along the widest possible range—not simply abstracters of ideas. When we read Dr. Tillyard's book the ideas that he shows as current in the sixteenth century—the Chain of Being, the Corresponding Planes, and so on—tend to appear merely quaint because they are divorced from the emotions and insights that they symbolised. Very minor writers can repeat the platitudes of an age; it is the genuine artists who put us in touch with something much more necessary for our own health than commonplaces that are not likely to be commonplaces again.

In *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* Mr. Spencer begins by demonstrating the continuity between the Elizabethan view of man and his world and the mediaeval view. In the middle ages it was accepted without question that man occupied a supremely important position in a geo-centric universe. He was wretched and worthless through sin, but, through grace, he was capable of salvation; and his position, intermediate between the beasts and the angels, was therefore essentially dignified. And because the universe was divinely arranged it was an ordered universe, in which the hierarchies of the cosmos, of sublunary nature and of the state were not only parallel but interconnected: there was felt to be a reciprocal influence between harmony or disorder in the soul of man the microcosm and order or disorder in the world at large. In essentials this was the picture inherited by the Elizabethans. What the Renaissance did was powerfully to reinforce the idea of conflict latent in the mediaeval view: the conception of a 'vast inclusive pattern of order' was undermined by the new astro-

[2] Which may have material as well as intellectual or spiritual causes: it is not always possible to make sharp distinctions. Some are derived from explicit intellectual formulations, as common ways of thinking in the nineteenth century were coloured by the current conception of evolution. Others, like the nineteenth-century attitudes to work and self-help are the reflexion of the economic working of society. Still more, and these in later ages are the most difficult to grasp, are determined by the nature of day to day activity and the immediate pressure of the environment, in ways modified by tradition. But who shall say where, in Cobbett's feeling for nature, the material and practical ends and something that we can only call spiritual—of the spirit—begins? I instance Cobbett not, of course, as an exceptional artist, but as a representative of an order.

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nomy (Copernicus), and by political realism (Machiavelli), just as the conception of man's dignity was undermined by scepticism (Montaigne).

> 'The violation of this order . . . was being felt everywhere at the end of the sixteenth century, and it was a violation which when it occurred in any one part, was felt throughout the whole structure. It was because Shakespeare, as he developed his art, was able to see individual experience in relation to the all-inclusive conflict produced by this violation, that his great tragedies have such wide reverberations and give us so profound a picture of the nature of man.'

The first two chapters of Mr. Spencer's book, of which the preceding paragraph is the barest summary, present information that is necessary to an understanding of the Elizabethan age as a whole.[3] And the students of Elizabethan literature will be grateful for the lucid account that follows of the development of the Morality technique—a technique for presenting conflict—which largely helped to determine the structure of Elizabethan plays. It is when Mr. Spencer tries to show the intimate bearing of the contemporary background of ideas on the particular living experience expressed in Shakespeare's plays that his work prompts the questions that I began by raising.

The general argument is sound enough: there is no doubt that Shakespeare was deeply and painfully aware of 'the conflict about man's nature that was so deeply embedded in the consciousness of the age'; and one way of measuring his development is in terms of the increasing inwardness of that sense of conflict that one finds in passing from the early histories to the mature tragedies. It is when we come down to particulars that our own best sense of what the plays are makes Mr. Spencer's exposition seem so unilluminating. 'The story' of *Measure for Measure*, we are told is 'poor material for dramatization', and Shakespeare 'does little to make any of the characters convincing.' Hamlet, 'the most absorbing character the stage has ever known', 'starts as an optimist'—apparently before the play begins—'discovers evil, and at the end is reconciled, however sadly, to his world.' Othello's love for Desdemona 'has no sensuality in it', and he kills her 'from the noblest motives'. Remarks such as these, and they are representative, make the new criticism seem oddly like Bradley. And even when Mr. Spencer has something fresh and valuable to say, as in his

[3]Since Mr. Spencer deliberately limits his approach to a consideration of psychological and moral factors it may not be relevant to complain that he entirely omits all reference to the vastly important economic developments of the century. All the same, to discuss the idea of conflict in the sixteenth century without so much as mentioning the disturbance caused by the emergence of a new kind of economy (and consequently, in the long run, of a new social order) is misleading.

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account of the final plays, where a new kind of acceptance takes the place of the tragic tension, he vigorously over-simplifies. To note the 'tone of incredulous wonder' in which the theme of re-birth is often expressed is good criticism: to say that the world of the later plays 'is the tragic world turned inside out' isn't criticism at all. Mr. Spencer quotes T. S. Eliot on Shakespeare's 'continuous development from first to last . . . the whole pattern formed by the sequence of plays', but his attempt to demonstrate that continuity in terms of Shakespeare's use of the basic assumptions of his age lands us with passages such as the following, on *The Tempest*:

> 'For in this last of his complete plays, as in those he wrote at the beginning of his career, Shakespeare uses, however unconsciously, the common body of psychological assumption that was given him by his time.
>
> 'And yet, like everything else in the last plays, that assumption is transfigured and transformed; it is presented in a different climate of reality from its presentation in the tragedies, and there is less need for either the background of kingship—the hierarchy of the state—or the background and hierarchy of the cosmos; the individual human life itself, in its finest manifestations, is enough. At the heart of *The Tempest* there is an incantation which accepts things as they are, a tone which has forgotten tragedy, an order melted at the edges into a new unity of acceptance and wonder.'

It seems to me that *The Tempest* is far from being 'melted at the edges,' or anywhere else. Nor have any of the later plays 'forgotten tragedy'. Mr. Spencer in fact completely fails to do what D. A. Traversi does so convincingly in his *Approach to Shakespeare*—that is, to suggest how the later plays *grow out of* the experience of the tragedies. But Mr. Traversi commands a critical method which not only, in its sensitive preoccupation with the minute particulars of art, reveals more of 'the essential Shakespeare', it offers a far better start for understanding Shakespeare's age.

By thinking in terms of 'ideas' which Shakespeare 'uses' —this revealing verb is continually cropping up—Mr. Spencer forcibly abstracts from the rich and complex reality of the plays, in which contemporary attitudes are embedded in a living tissue of individual feeling and perception. What we are given is a kind of Mercator's projection of the Shakespearean world—useful no doubt but thin and unsubstantial in comparison with the reality.

In his Preface Mr. Spencer remarks that for his special purpose he will not have much to say about 'the texture of Shakespeare's poetry'. But without attention to that texture it is difficult to see how the plays can be possessed for discussion even at the level at which Mr. Spencer wishes to discuss them, and for his purposes. He shows clearly, for example, the conceptions of order and disorder, of natural and unnatural, of truth and appearance, that run through *Macbeth*; and these, we agree, were basic commonplaces of the

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sixteenth century. But what organizes the play is a responsiveness —heightened by genius, but yet, part of the age—to the natural rhythms: a feeling, strong yet delicate, for unforced and ordered growth, that is brought into consciousness in the imagery. But this, like the play's firm and subtle verse-rhythms, gets no attention in Mr. Spencer's anatomy. If the chapter on *King Lear* contains, as it seems to me to contain, some of the most valid criticism in the book, this is because Mr. Spencer conducts his argument more closely than usual in terms of poetic texture. Yet even here, because he is not full conscious of the nature and function of poetic imagery, he misses completely the beat of positive life, the sense of renewal, of which we are first made aware—a few lines before Cordelia's invocation of the 'unpublish'd virtues of the earth'—in the description of the mad King (IV., iv):

> . . . why, he was met even now
> As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
> Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,
> With hor-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
> Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
> In our sustaining corn.[4]

The chapter on *Lear* also supplies us with what must be the last example of this same radical failure of attention. 'Natural law, justice and religion,' Mr. Spencer properly observes, 'are concepts which permeate the play, the validity of which the action seems to violate.' Goneril and Regan, for example,

> 'not only violate natural law by their behaviour to their father, they also violate their proper functions as human beings by their lust for Edmund, a lust which ends in murder and suicide, and which makes the description of them as animals doubly appropriate. One violation leads to another. As Albany says to Goneril:
>
> > That nature, which contemns its origin,
> > Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
> > She that herself will sliver and disbranch
> > From her material sap, perforce must wither
> > And come to deadly use.'

The commentary is just—so far as it goes. But these superb lines are not simply, as Mr. Spencer makes them, a comment on the action, an illustrative idea. They are an organic cell embodying the principles of life that inform not only *Lear* but the whole body of Shakespeare's mature work. They give us in little a sense of Shakespeare's feeling for human morality not as something arbitrary

[4]The strong upward sweep of the rhythm in the last two lines establishes the sustaining corn as stronger than the rank and choking weeds, whose bristling profusion is also *felt*, not just described.

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and imposed but as springing from the roots, the deepest needs and potentialities, of our nature. And they are a local instance of a mode of apprehension that Shakespeare—though he developed what was given him with unique intensity—shared with his age; so that to respond to them fully is to gain fresh insight into *Lear* and *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and simultaneously to get a more inward understanding of the essential life of the Shakespearean period. It is only by keeping firmly in mind considerations such as these that we can hope to obey Mr. Spencer's injunction, to 'try to imagine ourselves breathing the emotional and intellectual atmosphere of the time'.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

CHARLOTTE YONGE AND 'CHRISTIAN DISCRIMINATION'

CHARLOTTE YONGE, by Georgina Battiscombe (*Constable*, 15/-).

CHRISTIAN DISCRIMINATION, by Bro. George Every, S.S.M. (*Christian News-Letter Books*, 1/6).

THE LITERARY OUTLOOK, by S. L. Bethell (*Christian News-Letter Books*, 2/6).

MAN AND LITERATURE, by Norman Nicholson (*S.C.M. Press*, 10/6).

There has long been an Amanda Ros vogue of Charlotte Yonge's writings and this biography is chiefly a product of that vogue. Miss Battiscombe has made an attractive book in which information about the life is interspersed with some just comments on the novels and illuminating bits of background. It is perhaps the only kind of book on Charlotte Yonge for which a wide public could be expected now, the popular Lytton-Strachey treatment suiting well enough the period and the Amanda Ros aspect of the subject. But to be amused merely by Charlotte Yonge is not the most profitable reaction. Miss Battiscombe wobbles between amusement and a desire to claim literary status of some kind for some of Miss Yonge's novels that she enjoys in some way she can't explain. To see these novels taken at their own and the contemporary valuation we must turn to *Theology* and some recent related publications, where claims for this writer as a serious artist and a very valuable Christian novelist have been made. Evidently these ought to be investigated before the canon of English Literature finds itself permanently burdened with one of the prolific fiction-writers whom time alone has already expelled.

It seems incredible that Charlotte Yonge's novels could be taken seriously as literature except by those of her own way of thinking, and the claims I have referred to seem in fact to be based on the asserted value of her fictions as religious myths. Charlotte Yonge was a day-dreamer with a writing itch that compensated

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her for a peculiarly starved life. What was pushed out of her is interesting to us not for what it enunciates but for what it reveals and only in so far as a critical apparatus is brought to bear on it. The profitable book on her would be a contribution to the sociological history of literature: an illuminating contrast to Bunyan and a comparison with Jane Austen suggest themselves at once as revealing something about the cultural conditions which nourish a writer or otherwise, the kind of religious outlook that can produce a humane art and the kind that can't. This author had no medium at her command for conveying through literature such moral perceptions as she had, for unlike Bunyan she had no popular inherited art of literary expression to draw on and the personal sensibility of the writer which creates its own artistic language she decidedly had not. Jane Austen, in contrast, shows what the spinster of the previous generation gained by enjoying a real social life of the family and community, the life fed by adult conversation, free play of the mind and character, observation of all sorts and varieties of life and attitudes to it at different social and moral levels appreciated by standards that had arisen out of life itself instead of, like Charlotte Yonge, living only in the ignorant idealization projected by an inhuman theory.

As a moralist she is on a par with pulpit denouncers of short hair and slacks for women—that is, she couldn't distinguish between social conventions and morals of a less superficial quality, and having no sense of proportion she gave as much attention and censure in her novels to the former as to Dissipation and Doubt, the blanket concepts which she used for sin (not being acquainted with any more concrete expression of it). A person for whom evil consists of impropriety and some things she has vaguely heard tell of would seem to be disqualified as a framer of religious myths. And correspondingly she lacked (unlike the fanatic Bunyan or the spinsters Miss Austen and Miss Edgeworth) any sympathy for and even recognition of the natural sources of healthy life. The innocence of the dove is itself hardly an adequate equipment for a novelist, but even the race of doves would have died out soon after the Creation if as lacking as Charlotte Yonge in the instincts that make for survival. This brings us back to her attitude to life, that seems to have determined the interpretation she gave to the Anglican faith imparted to her by Keble. The Church seems to have been less an illumination of life for her than a substitute for living, so we see her selecting the anti-Life elements in Christianity for stress and idealization. The resulting picture of human action is not only impracticable but morbid. Consider the typical pattern of her novels. There is a permanent invalid who is a hero or heroine; tubercular invalids are peculiarly saintly and frequently an idiot is idealized; the most blessed marriages are those in which one party is diseased or physically incapable; the most blessed betrothals are those where the death of one party prevents marriage at all; the most blessed life for a man is to give up the natural field for his abilities in order to become a South Seas missionary, and for a

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woman to renounce a possible husband in order to devote herself to her relatives, even if they are only imbecile grandparents, or on the mere wish of a parent—self-sacrifice is an end in itself. She makes much play with symbolism but as was inevitable in so poorly-nourished an imagination (the arts meant nothing to her and life gave her no more pregnant experience than the death of a parent, no greater stimulus than a missionary meeting) her symbolism is schoolgirlish. Comparison with any novel where symbols are deployed by an original mind in vital connection with life would illustrate this—*Jude the Obscure*, *Moby Dick*, *Hard Times*, Conrad's *Victory*, one of Hawthorne's or T. F. Powys's works. It is her unconscious symbolism that is more interesting—e.g. the type of admirable wife who is no wife because of an accident to her lower limbs or spine, the saintly clergyman who has either gone blind or developed consumption, the passionate relation between brother and sister in a picture of life where the idea of sex is prohibited. It is understandable that some should find this vision of the good society congenial but that will not convince the majority that it is literature that makes for any kind of health or can offer anything to the mature.

We are entitled to press home this kind of criticism because it has a demonstrable bearing on the failure of Charlotte Yonge's fictions to be of literary value. We are not concerned with her qualifications as a Christian but as a novelist. The lack of roots in first-hand experience for her imagination, of substance for her moral passion, prevent her most cherished effects from conveying what she evidently thought they would. It would have required a genius like Kafka's or Bunyan's, with that imaginative pressure which gives body to allegory and that artistic genius for expressing it, to make as literature anything of the new-born infant's baptism and the deferred confirmation scenes she so often stages. Art is a realm where the will can never be taken for the deed, and readers may be forgiven for smiling at places where the utmost solemnity of response is confidently expected by Miss Yonge. Even compared with writers of her own age and class she was deficient in this respect: she had none of that capacity for fable which enabled Kingsley to create in the gist of *The Water Babies* a Christian myth which children readily feel even before they understand it. 'The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field' wrote Henry James in his study of the novelist's function. It is certainly something required of the novelist whose claims to our attention are that she staked everything on presenting religious values. But Miss Yonge is so timid and inexperienced morally that her effects are in fact trivial. Religious small-change is handed us on every possible occasion; if, for instance, anyone is disappointed in some trifling matter, mamma or elder sister is sure to remark: 'I dare say it is very good for us not to have our ambition gratified. There are so many troubles worse than these failures, that it only shows how happy we are that we should take them so much to heart'. Surely such inflation lowers the value of the moral currency?

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The limitations that produced moral triteness are paralleled by her worldly ignorance that cripples her fictions: meeting the mass of humanity only as Sunday scholars—she never set foot in a cottage—she yet undertook, with the bestseller's confidence, to treat the largest social and ethical questions in a China-to-Peru setting of real life, so that 'there is a bad Chartist spirit among the colliers' is the only recognition of something wrong that she makes in a novel explicitly dealing with the social problem.

The Yonge type of moral fervour impresses one as amounting to nothing more than a refusal to allow anyone else moral or spiritual privacy or freedom. She has therefore no basis for the moral drama essential to the novelist's art. We think in contrast of Richardson, who subscribed like her to the antediluvian theory of parental control of a daughter's hand and the submission of the daughter as a religious duty. In *Clarissa* where this theory is the mainspring of the action it is checked by the novelist's deeper feeling that if we look at the particular instance the theory won't do because it outrages human sympathies. The interplay between the theory (accepted as morally right) and the test-case (appealing to another source of values) produces the tragedy: Clarissa can act only as she does, in duty to herself, but from the moment she violates the theory by taking the only means of escape in her power—accepting Lovelace's offer of assistance—she is doomed; yet after suffering every form of degradation she commands respect and triumphs. Richardson's conviction of the importance of his theme informs with power the smallest details of his setting. There is no such drama in Miss Yonge's novels because she was incapable of perceiving that moral theory may require revision or reinterpretation in the light of experience or in consequence of a change in the sensibility of a society. In her fictions moral lesson is deduced from theory as mechanically as in a Sunday-School story of the last century. Apart from the ideal of Christian living described, as to the desirability of which there can evidently be more than one opinion, she has nothing to present but a moral ethos where everybody's first duty is to give up everything for everybody else and where no one can enjoy anything without feeling guilty and obliged to justify himself at a moral bar, where every impulse is suspect and made to seem sinful, and where the only sanctionable activities unconnected with religion are parlour games and a form of lively conversation where humour is restricted to thoroughly harmless puns. As representing a religious culture these novels are not impressive and it cannot do the Anglican cause a service to resurrect her fictions as propaganda.

It remains to ask, why should anyone want to resurrect them? Charlotte Yonge was logical as only a simple-minded fanatic can be, pressing her theory to its extreme conclusions. Thus she held, and bases the action of novels upon the argument, that there can be no secular art (not by inclusion but by rejection—no secular music should exist, only Victorian Sacred Music), she objected to any higher education for women because only by being in a religious

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order could they justify it, and so on. She shows, says a contributor to the current number of *Theology*, how far a clearly conceived dogmatic outlook will carry a writer. And it is on these grounds that she is put forward as a valuable author by the critics of a new school who seem to derive, as they acknowledge inspiration, from Mr. T. S. Eliot's *After Strange Gods*, where 'the standard of orthodoxy' was explicitly brought to bear on literature. This school of Anglican criticism has already produced its text-books, its poetry (discussed elsewhere in this issue), its drama, and has in *Theology* its organ. It therefore calls for consideration here, like the Marxist literary movement of the 'thirties which we discussed at the time and which it in many respects resembles. It offers to perform two critical functions. First, to improve the orthodox by opening up access for them to the literature of the age, in which we have only to offer them our best wishes for success. Second, there is a very evident assertion that what Bro. George Every calls Christian Discrimination has a superior light by which literary criticism should be directed, which can by innate virtue short-circuit literary criticism.

We have to insist, as we did with the Marxists, that the essential thing in undertaking literary criticism is that you should be a literary critic, concerned, with complete disinterestedness, to demonstrate by the methods of literary criticism exactly what it is that a piece of literary art is doing. This is often quite different from what it alleges it is doing or undertakes to do, and we have to repeat to the dogmatic Christian discriminator the warning we gave to the Marxist critic, that before certifying a work on the grounds of content or apparent orthodoxy it is as well to be sure that its actual 'message', what it inevitably and essentially communicates, is what you thought it was. By *not* applying the method of literary criticism to Charlotte Yonge's novels the Christian discriminator has undertaken to endorse something that many Christians of all kinds would agree, one imagines, to deplore and disown. Miss Sayers provided a similar test in her novels and drama, and we see the principle at work exposed in *Blackfriars* where an ecclesiastic recently declared that her literary productions are valuable art *because* she is orthodox. The avowedly Christian critic would have to be a saint indeed to be capable of the disinterestedness necessary to expose the writings of a pillar of his orthodoxy as bad art. [Catholic critics have before now incurred animus in their own community by suggesting that Chesterton and Belloc for instance were not only not good poets but have an undesirable aspect.] Though Bro. George Every does allow that a Christian artist is not necessarily always better than a freethinking one, he is nevertheless generally seen in the position of the Evangelical preacher who condemned Maria Edgeworth's novels because they insidiously showed perfect happiness and virtue without religion; thus he values highly Charlotte Yonge's novels because she shows that you cannot be good and have no right to be happy unless you are a High Anglican. Similarly we see Mr. Bethell concerned in his book

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not to be a literary critic but to make an appearance of literary criticism for his own purposes—to prove that he may enjoy best-sellers and detective stories and the rest without any loss of face as a Christian soul, that his tastes in fiction and poetry, those of *l'homme moyen sensuel*, are not inconsistent with alleged possession of the finest perceptions in life and art and the realm of the spirit (thus contradicting one of Bro. George Every's avowed arguments in his book in the same series). If the Christian critic of literature is not a literary critic he is nothing, and having become one he will hardly be content to cease to be one, to exercise some 'standard of orthodoxy' or to indulge in special pleading. For in examining a piece of literature as a literary critic he is inevitably appraising it and the appraisal is a process much more subtle than the application of any standard of orthodoxy or the extraction of any moral lesson or the discovery of some panacea for a situation producing works of art that don't answer to his doctrinal specifications. Grant a position of privilege to the Christian as a literary critic and we must admit the equivalent claims of the Marxist, the agnostic, and the subdivisions of Christian critics, each with his own standard of orthodoxy and each concerned to push the claims of his equivalents of Miss Sayers and Miss Yonge and his sect's Georgian poets (and to denounce the other parties' literary productions). Sectarian literary criticism would lead to a variety of subjective criticism where little if any common agreement as to value would be possible. At present we have, the inheritance from a long tradition, a centre of merely literary critics whose disinterested evaluations have made possible some recognition of poets and novelists who subscribe to no orthodoxy, that is, nearly all creative artists of the last two centuries ; this centre moreover provides an atmosphere and milieu where value-judgments can be discussed with some freedom. When Bro. George Every published a piece in *Theology* some years ago mentioning the work of *Scrutiny* in this field, Mr. C. S. Lewis promptly wrote up invoking anathema on him and *Scrutiny*, and when Mr. Turnell eight years ago founded *Arena* as a focus for Catholic discrimination and argued (at a very much more impressive critical level than the Anglican critics) that Catholics lost something by cutting themselves off from the live tradition of contemporary literature, *The Tablet* made a response similar to Mr. Lewis's. The violence and narrowness of Marxist dogmatism are too generally known to need illustration. Perhaps what a work of literature has to offer us is not best discovered in an atmosphere in which the spirit of theology is given play, in which (as in *After Strange Gods*) the direct inspiration of the Devil is imputed to any artist who runs counter to our prejudices, in which access to the one source of absolute truth is confidently claimed by the critic, and anathema invoked on dissentients.

The method of literary criticism, as repeatedly defined in these pages, is to secure the maximum general agreement for evaluation by starting with something demonstrable—the surface of the work—and through practical criticism to proceed

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inwards to a deeper and wider kind of criticism commanding assent (or giving an opening for disagreement and discussion) at every step. It may well be shocking to the mere literary critic that Christians and even professional maintainers of standards of orthodoxy should be unable to read what is in front of them, should be unable, for example, to discover for themselves, even if they cannot point to the evidence in the texture of her writings, that Miss Sayers unconsciously incarnates a very inferior set of attitudes and values, or (conversely) cannot because of theological differences see that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is great art. It seems to follow that a specialist non-theological training is necessary to make sure what it is we are discussing when what we want to discuss is a poem or a novel. Bro. George Every looks forward (in *Theology*, Sept., 1940) to a company of Christian critics who being trained in theology as well as what he calls our grammar and rhetoric will be able to provide literary criticism that he has no doubt, he says, will be better than the criticism of *Scrutiny*.[1] This seems too sanguine. There is no reason to suppose that those trained in theology ,or philosophy for that matter, are likely to possess, what is essential to the practice of literary criticism, that 'sensitiveness of intelligence' described by Matthew Arnold as equivalent to conscience in moral matters. A theological training seems to have a disabling effect and has subsequently to be struggled against when literary criticism is the concern. And there are other dangers. When theology is made a substitute for literary criticism or is tacked on to bad criticism the result is disastrous. In *Man and Literature* Mr. Norman Nicholson, following up *After Strange Gods*, is seen at work, armed with a few theological themes, on all kinds of recent authors. Though no doubt of interest to those of his own outlook who cannot begin to read for themselves, the results are quite useless for any other purpose, one would have thought, for this writer has no fineness of perception and no corresponding critical idiom and method. The chapter on D. H. Lawrence is particularly gross and therefore misrepresenting. (The assumption that they are all addressing a W.E.A. kind of audience would account for the crudeness of Mr. Bethell's and Bro. George Every's arguments too, but the tone of Christian knowingness they all employ does not improve matters, nor add grace to their pillaging of other writers without acknowledgment). It was in the palmy days of *The Criterion* that theology became the latest *chic* in the fashionable intellectual's

[1]It seems that in self-protection we should point out that *Scrutiny* critics come from all kinds of social and religious backgrounds, and that we have repeatedly published contributions from at least four Roman Catholic critics. It would be interesting to know whether these could be picked out on internal evidence alone, and if Bro. George Every could indicate exactly in what way he thinks their criticism of, say, *Le Misanthrope*, *As You Like It* and other Shakespeare plays could be improved by the addition in some way of theology.

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outfit, and we can observe in some members of the *Theology* group the point where the Christian discriminator and the Bloomsbury exhibitionist do not merely meet but overlap; if theology is going to be aired for those purposes the gravest suspicions of its value to literary criticism will be confirmed. The method of *After Strange Gods* is temptingly easy, and particularly adapted to further individual and group complacency, it is evident.

The line for a Christian apologist for literature to take is surely that in the work of considerable poets and novelists—few of whom were or remained churchmen, and we may well ask why this is so—the finest and keenest perceptions of an age show themselves, communicated in the language by which we live as social beings; and that to deprive oneself of them, in the name of religious orthodoxy or anything else, is to deprive oneself of full life and real understanding of the world we are part of. The tendency of orthodoxy is to repress these perceptions for its own convenience and cause a moral cramp in the developing consciousness—an effect very obvious in Charlotte Yonge's novels so that these might justly be described as undesirable literature.[2] The spontaneous explosive reaction of artists to this kind of pressure is as inevitable as a drowning man's struggle for air: Blake, Samuel Butler, the early Shaw and Lawrence among others bear violent witness to the force of a repressive moral environment and the waste of energy exerted to lever it off. When Lawrence wrote:

> 'It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the importance of the novel properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead.'

he indicates the most important part of the novelist's function, and suggests how much more delicate and complex that is than the

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[2]There is a quotable instance, in one of her most esteemed novels, that localises the general effect described above. A small child decorating the room with holly has climbed on a chair by the fire, forgetting this was forbidden, and a moral and emotional scene at the child's expense is staged on the subject of transgression, ending with the curate's reporting with emotion:

> 'Wilmet recommended not taking the prize prayer-book to church [as punishment], and she acquiesced with tears in her eyes. A good child's repentance is a beautiful thing—
>
> "O happy in repentance' school
> So early taught and tried".'
>
> [*The Pillars of the House*]

The determination of the educated that a secular school system should take children out of the clutches of the religious is understandable.

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work of the moralist or theologian, enjoying his clearly conceived dogmatic outlook and ordering his final judgments by the 'standard of orthodoxy', can be. The novelist, unlike the theologian, works in terms of concrete particularity.

If Christian discriminators wish to gain a respectful hearing they must jettison their Charlotte Yonges instead of trying to thrust them on us, and show themselves in opposition to that tendency of all orthodoxies for which some phrase needs coining to express the converse of what Arnold called 'the dissidence of Dissent'. They must possess a finer sensibility in their own province as well as in ours. 'Brother Every, discriminating Christianly', as Mr. Bethell puts it, states dogmatically of the maintenance of standards and work of the literary critic, that this 'capacity is certainly a matter of intelligence and not virtue' and therefore inessential for a Christian (though possibly an added grace); Mr. C. S. Lewis made a similar statement even more vehemently in the attack in *Theology* cited above. The virtue that does not include this kind of intelligence, we reply, can be only a very qualified variety and contains an element of danger to itself. When Charlotte Bronte in *Villette* records the recoil of a Protestant conscience from a professedly Christian society which seemed to her to have 'gone dead', when Stendhal diagnoses the seminary world of the day in *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, when Henry James and Edith Wharton examine the values by which a society lived, they are doing in a sharp local way what all good novelists are doing, the work of the critic and maintainers of standards; and Bro. George Every's idea that if only general education could be stopped (and he hopes it may)[3] the need for literature and criticism would disappear shows how shallow his recognition of the uses of literature must be. If the Christian Discriminators singled out for recognition the art of the Stendhals and Conrads and Tolstoys and showed they could understand and utilise such novels as *Nostromo*, *Middlemarch*, *Anna Karenina*, *Darkness at Noon*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *The Root and the Flower*, instead of deploring George Eliot, claiming Jane Austen as a 'Christian novelist' because they know she was a clergyman's daughter, and displaying superiority on theological grounds to Thomas Hardy, their own intention would be advanced as well as the cause of literature. That they should desire to make literature 'the handmaid of theology', as Mr. Bethell says, is natural, but when supported by so very poor a showing of first-hand literary criticism their efforts to prove that they can make it so, let alone that it should be so, are peculiarly unimpressive.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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[3] *Theology*, September, 1940.

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